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world headquarters:
Unit G & H, 115 Cleveland Street,
London W1P 5PN, England
Telephone 071 580 7522
Fax 071 323 6905

Editor/Publisher
Richard Cook
Assistant Editor
Mark Sinker
Advertising Manager
Sue Kemal
Designer
Stephen at Namara
Administration Manager & News Editor
Adele Yaron
Administrative Assistant
Roshmi Khanavati
Founder
Anthony Wood

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Cover: Robby the Robo looks forward to the next age. Model courtesy the Becky Sinker Collection.

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Contributors this issue: Mike Arberstein, Cat Ball, Louise Gray, Laura Connolly, Jack Cook, John Corbett, Mark Dines, Mike Fish, John Fordham, Martin Gayford, Huggy Glass,

Andy Hamilton, Max Harrison, Nick Kinsley, Bob Koff, K. Martin, Kenny Matheson, Phil McNiff, Bruce Morton, Stuart Nicholson, Clive Parker, Andrew Pickens, Brian Prentice, David Radford, Simon Reynolds, Martina Richardson, Jonathan Romney, Richard Scott, Bucky Sinker, David Top, Simon Trank, Ben Watson, Philip Watson, Barry Witherden.

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NOW'S presents . . . THE NEWS SECTION

THE TIME

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MORE RHYTHM LESS DRUGS



• **DOUBLE BASSIST**
 Danny Thompson takes his undefinable sound and his unique group Whatever on tour from 30 January to 7 March. Thompson, who began his career with 60s BritJazz luminaries like Stan Tracey and John McLaughlin, and then went on to make his name with folk-rockers Pentangle, John Renbourn and Bert Jansch, has since worked with such wide-ranging figures as David Sylvian, Kate Bush, Kathryn Tickell and Rod Stewart, and was recently responsible for introducing eccentric New Yorker musician Moondog to British audiences. Details of the Whatever tour can be found in In Town Tonight.

• **EVELYN GLENNE**, who apparently aims to do everything possible to further the art of percussion, performs with The Boamemouth Sinfonietta this month. The programme includes *Percussion Cauter*, a new composition by Dominic Muldowney, which draws on the mokongo rhythm for its African character and was specially written for Glennie. They will also perform *Tryt* by rising young Scottish composer James Macmillan, along with works by Prokofiev and Stravinsky. See In Town Tonight for tour details.

TV FREE SPREE

On The Edge, a four-part series also on Channel 4, examines at last that widely practised yet little understood musical activity, improvisation. Filmed around the world from Sacre Coeur to the River Ganges, the four one-hour films explore a wide variety of cultures, and feature unique performances by some of the world's finest improvisers including percussionist Max Roach, blues giant Buddy Guy and cornetist Butch Morris. Derek Bailey – pioneering British free-improv guitarist and author of *Improvisation* – writes and narrates the programmes, guiding us through medieval 'art' music, jazz, blues,



Butch Morris (courtesy Channel 4)

African and Indian traditions to rebay the vital role that improvisation has played in the genesis of all music (but will he mention Grace Fields?) The films will be broadcast on Sundays from February 2nd.

• **THE ROLLING**
 Rock Jazz Season brings some major international names to Scotland as well as featuring a selection of the best in local talent. Commencing on February 7th with the Tam White Band, the season also features jazz piano supreme McCoy Tyner on Feb 14th and The Courtney Pine Qt on Feb 28th. The series continues into March with Carol Kidd on the 6th and The Julian Joseph Qt on March 15th. All concerts take place at Scotland's flagship jazz venue, The Queen's Hall, Edinburgh. Tel: 031 668 2019.

• **THIS MONTH'S**
 Brighton Jazz Bop, which features organist Johnny Hammond, the Brand New Heavies and the inimitable Gilles Peterson, takes place on Friday 21st February at The Event, West Street, Brighton. Tickets cost £9 on the door and £7.00 in advance and can be obtained from The Event (0273 732 627), Rounder Records (0273 25440), and City Sounds (071 4055 454). For coach details from London call Family Affairs on 081 644 7552. And if you miss the Bop, you can catch Johnny at The Orange, West London on February 29th and 30th.

• **THE ROJARO**
 (Rock-Jazz-Roots) Archive is a Norwegian project recently set up to build the largest international collection of music periodicals (specialist and more generally) yet attempted, covering all "non-classical" musics (hiphop to deathmetal, jazz to country), from at least 22 countries and in at least 11 languages. The RoJaRo Index will include up to 300 periodicals (partially or fully analysed), as well as a quick-reference guide to where to find articles, interviews and reviews (organised by artist, title or subject), and where to obtain periodicals, especially hard-to-find fanzines and "underground" publications. It intends to publish yearly, from 1992. A uniquely wide-ranging labour of love that will be a boon to librarians, researchers, collectors and other enthusiasts, RoJaRo is keen to encourage support membership, subscriptions and donations (including magazine collections). For further information send two IRCs to RoJaRo Archive, K.M. Aase, PO Box 6742 Rodeløkka, N-0503 Oslo 3, Norway.

• **AN EVENING**
 With Dudley Moore promises a collection of jazz and classical music with a healthy dose of humour. Moore, perhaps better known for his Derek and Clive records, has film-role as the alcoholic Arthur or even his quest for missing chickens, is in fact a pianist who graduated from Oxford in music. He has played alongside John Dankworth and travelled the world with his own trio. Now the Trio joins The BBC Concert Orchestra at the Brighton Centre on March 12th, Manchester G-Mex on the 14th, London Royal Albert Hall 15th-17th, and Birmingham NEC on March 22nd.

NOW'S THE TIME

• **CHANNEL 4'S Russian New Music** was first conceived when the Soviet Union was still a union, the Berlin Wall was a fact of life and any form of artistic expression outside Soviet control seemed utterly unlikely. The ten-part series written and presented by Leo records label-boss Leo Feigin explores a musical form that for years was only known to a limited circle of connoisseurs, and showcases performances from some of its leading exponents. The series starts on Thursday January 30th with a portrait of the wild Russian pianist Sergei Kuryokhin. Other artists covered in the series include Vyacheslav Ganelin of the Ganelin Trio, and Moldavian-born Misha Alperin and gypsy singer Valentina Ponomareva. With the doors to the West now open, the series also examines the future of Russian New Music. The programmes can be seen on Thursdays at 11.30pm.

• **THE DUKE** seems to be much in the limelight at present. Saxophonist John Harle releases his interpretation of the music of jazz legend Duke Ellington through EMI on February 10. It's entitled *The Shadow Of The Duke*, and Harle is joined by Stan Tracy, Mike Wearbrook, Jodie Holland, Michael Nynan and others, to provide some unique arrangements of Duke's work. Harle has his 12-piece band embark on a major UK tour in March (dates will appear next month). And in the spotlight at The Globe Theatre, London, an all-singing, all-dancing cast perform Ellington's *Spyglass Laiders*. With its own swinging band, the revue covers 32 of his timeless classics, and tickets can be obtained from the Theatre Box Office on 071 437 3667.

WIRE WINNER: GEE SPOT

JONATHAN GEE, Most Promising Newcomer in The Wire British Jazz Awards, is joined by Wayne Barchelor on bass and Winston Clifford on drums for his latest UK tour. All three are known on the national and international scene, having played and recorded with artists such as Courtney Pine, Jean Toussaint and Monty Alexander. Pianist Gee hopes that their repertoire of original compositions and occasional standards will earn them a warm welcome wherever they go. We hope so too!



The Three Wise Men

• **THE TENOR** Clef, sister-club to London's Bass Clef, has run into financial difficulties and has subsequently had to cancel most of its programme for the coming months. The club, which opened last year, aimed to complement the dance-orientated Bass Clef with some live jazz sets. At a recent meeting it was decided to use the upstairs space as an addition to the Bass Clef, featuring London-based jazz and contemporary duos at no extra cost to the punter. However, there are still plans to have at least one special artist a month, for which there will be a separate entrance fee. For more information and details of cancellations call 071 729 2476.

• **JAZZPAR**, THE Danish project which aims to promote jazz as one of the most important art forms of our time, has awarded the 1992 JAZZPAR prize to American alto saxophonist Lee Konitz. Previous recipients of this prestigious prize, which carries with it a hefty financial reward, have been band leader Misha Richard Abrams and tenor saxophonist David Murray. A tour (Denmark only) planned for March will feature The Lee Konitz Nonet, the John Tchicai Q4 with Misha Mengelberg and the Jorgen Emborg Quartet featuring Steve Swallow. For tour details contact The Danish Jazz Centre, Borupvej 66 B, DK - 4683 Ronnele, Denmark.

• **JAZZ UMBRELLA** is a grass-roots organisation amongst London's jazz musicians who, in the absence of work or the prospect of work, have decided to form a united body to represent their cause. In addition to securing a network of venues to provide them with regular gigs, the group hopes to build up a loyal and supportive audience, to develop close links with the community and eventually to produce a magazine written by musicians for musicians. So far, the organisation claims 80 members "between 17 and 70", and organiser Simon Purcell hopes that this number will steadily grow as news of the organisation spreads. For further information contact Simon on 081 555 5239.

• **THE ONLY** British concert by Steve Reich and Musicians takes place on Thursday February 27th at 8pm at the Royal Festival Hall. The four works to be performed are *Drumming Part I* and *Sextet*, which established Reich's international reputation, *Different Trains*, which in 1990 won the Best New Composition Grammy for the Kronos Quartet's recording, and *Electric Counterpoint*. Tickets: 071 928 8800.

• **THE SIX** winners of our Pre-Seasonal Beaufort Competition (issue 93), who each receive a copy of Keith Shadwick's *Illustrated Story Of Jazz*, are: Ian Worthington of Warrington, Cheshire, Mr S A Downey of London E2, Jacqueline Winney of East Sussex, Robert Edwards of Powys, Wales, Seve Day of Chew Magna, Bristol and S C Fennimore from Ayreshire. The answers we were looking for were: Bessie Smith, Rahsaan Roland Kirk and Miles Davis.

NOW'S presents . . . THE NEWS SECTION

THE TIME

• **NORTH INDIAN** vocalists Rajan and Sajan Mitra join British singer Linda Hirst in a programme bringing together Indian ragas and contemporary Western vocal music. Tour details of their *Voxer* project, which includes compositions by John Cage and Henri Pousseur, can be found in *In Town Tonight*.

• **THE SEVENTH** Barber Festival of Contemporary Music features a number of premieres and new commissions, plus performances by the Smith Quartet and the Birmingham Contemporary Music Group, which is made up of players from the City Of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra. It all takes place in the Barber Institute at the University of Birmingham from February 26 to March 1. Details 021 472 0962.

in *Tonight*

Our choice of February's jazz gigs

ALDERSHOT West End Centre: Jonathan Gee Trio (22)

BATH Metronome Club (0225 334 816): Julian Argüelles (7); Keith Tippett (15)

BERWICK The Maltings (0289 330 999): Evelyn Glennie with Bournemouth Sinfonietta (12)

BIRMINGHAM Adrian Boult Hall (021 414 5703): Henry Threadgill's Very Very Circus/Orphy Robinson's Anavus (1); Markus Stockhausen (12); *Fanfare!*: Danny Thompson's Whatever (26); *Town Hall* Jan Garbarek Quartet (29).

BRACKNELL South Hill Park (0344 484 123): Henry Threadgill's Very Very Circus/Orphy Robinson's Anavus (3).

BRIGHTON Gardner Centre (0273 685 447): Henry Threadgill's Very Very Circus, Orphy Robinson's Anavus (5); Tommy Chase Qt (13); Henry

Lowther's Still Waters (26). **BRISTOL St George's** (0272 230 359): Free Jazz Qt (4); *The Albert* (0272 661 968); District Six (12); Danny Thompson's Whatever (16); *Old Vic*: Keith Tippett's Seedbed Jazz Workshop (16); Pinski Zoo (23).

CAMBRIDGE The Junction Henry Lowther's Still Waters (21).

CARDIFF Four Bars Inn (0222 340 591): Jonathan Gee Trio (20); Henry Lowther's Still Waters Tour (22).

COLCHESTER Arts Centre (0206 577 301): Danny Thompson's Whatever (6); Dick Morrissey (13); Tommy Chase Qt (27).

COVENTRY Arts Centre (0203 524 524): Evelyn Glennie with Bournemouth Sinfonietta (8).

DARLINGTON Arts Centre (0352 483 168): Tommy Chase Qt (Jan 31).

DURHAM Trevelyan College (091 384 3720): Voices (28).

EXETER Arts Centre (0392 219 741): Tommy Chase Qt (14).

HEREFORD School Of Art and Design (0432 273 359): Free Jazz Qt (5).

HERTFORDSHIRE Blue Note Club (0442 242 827): Alec Dankworth's Acoustic Tamba (20).

LANCASTER University (0524 65201 x3431): Evelyn Glennie with Bournemouth Sinfonietta (11).

LEEDS Irish Centre (0532 480 887): Henry Threadgill's Very Very Circus/Orphy Robinson's Anavus (Jan 31).

LEICESTER Phoenix Arts Centre (0533 354 854): Voices (29).

LIVERPOOL Philharmonic Hall (051 709 3375): Evelyn Glennie with Bournemouth Sinfonietta (13). *Blue Coast Arts Centre* (051 709 5297): Cleveland Watkiss Group (13).

MANCHESTER Band On The Wall (061 832 6623):

Tommy Chase Qt (Jan 30); Free Jazz Qt (6); Henry Lowther's Still Waters (20).

NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE Corner House (091 265 9602): Jim Mullen Qt (2); Tommy Chase Qt (9); City Hall (091 261 2606): Evelyn Glennie with Bournemouth Sinfonietta (10).

NORTHAMPTON Roadmender (0604 604 222): Tommy Chase Qt (6); Cleveland Watkiss Band (21).

NORWICH St Andrew's Hall (0603 764 764): Evelyn Glennie with Bournemouth Sinfonietta (4).

NOTTINGHAM Aboretum Manor: Harry 'Sweets' Edison (5); Orphy Robinson Band (19).

OXFORD Christchurch College (0187 229 3374): David-Jean Baptiste Qt (29).

SHEFFIELD Leadmill (0742 754 500): Henry Threadgill's Very Very Circus/Orphy Robinson's Anavus (2); Harry 'Sweets' Edison (16); City Hall (0742 735 295): Evelyn Glennie with Bournemouth Sinfonietta (14).

SHREWSBURY Bridgnorth Leisure Centre (0746 761 541): Evelyn Glennie with Bournemouth Sinfonietta (9).

SOUTHAMPTON University (0703 593 741): Barry Guy (6); Turner Sims Hall (0703 593 672): Henry Threadgill's Very Very Circus/Orphy Robinson's Anavus (4); Evelyn Glennie with Bournemouth Sinfonietta (15);

Danny Thompson's Whatever (20); *The Gantry* (0703 229 3191); Tommy Chase Qt (1).

WARWICK University Phil Minton/Veryan Weston (5).

in *London*

BARBICAN EC2 (071 638 8891): Foyer - Jason Rebello, Clark Tracey Quintet (28).

BARNET OLD BULL ARTS CENTRE (081 449 0048): Ivor Cutler/John Burnside

(15); Tommy Chase Quartet (16).

BATTERSEA ARTS CENTRE (071 223 2223): Harry Beckett Quartet (9); Jim Mullen Quartet (16); Jazz Garden (23).

BLOW THE FUSE, Kings Head N1: (0187 254 8935): Carol Grimes (9); Annie Whitehead's Rude Qt (23).

BLACKHEATH CONCERT HALLS (081 318 9758): Andy Sheppard (Jan 30).

BULLS HEAD, Barnes (0187 567 2015): Paz (5); Vertigo (24).

EAST DULWICH TAVERN (0187 693 9667): Evidence (5); Jim Mullen (12).

JAZZ CAFE NW1 (071 284 4358): Something Else with Jez Nelson, Chris Phillips & guests every Monday. Macos Parker (18-20); Jean Carne (21-22); Andrew Hill (27-28); Bhundu Boys (29).

JAZZ RUMOURS, N16 (081 254 6198): Veryan Weston Qt (7); Gus Garride Trio (14); Marcio Mattos (21), Elton Dean Qt (28).

RED ROSE CLUB, N7 (071 263 7265): Gus Garride Trio (9).

THE ORANGE (071 371 4317): Jazz-Rap Weekend (7-8); Andy Hamilton (21/22); Johnny Hammond (29, 30).

THE SOUTH BANK COMPLEX (071 928 8800): Henry Threadgill/Orphy Robinson (Jan 30); Evelyn Glennie with Bournemouth Sinfonietta (5); Markus

Stockhausen/Evan Parker (15); Steve Reich (27); Voices (27). Foyer, Jonathan Gee Trio (13); George Haslam Quartet (28).

TENOR CLEF N1 (071 729 2476): Randy Weston (23-29).

WATERMANS ARTS CENTRE (081 368 1176): Tommy Chase Qt (21).

New items and listings should reach us by 2nd February for inclusion in the March issue.

WIN!
WIN!

Yes, we used to be acid-free. But like Ace Of Clubs say "Everything's Going to the Beat"! So this month, through the thoughtful offices of the heads at Acid Jazz, we're offering ten sets of stuff that's guaranteed to send you on a trip.

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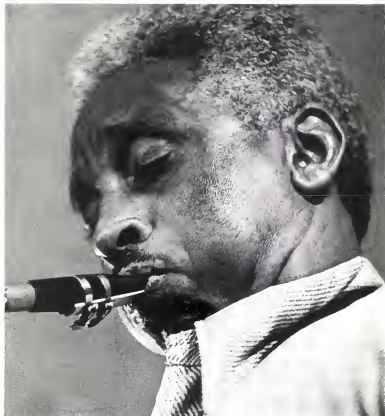
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THE WIRE • WOULD YOU BELIEVE, IT'S A HAPPENING?

NOW'S presents . . . **TEDDY EDWARDS: saxophonist**
THE TIME



by **Brian Morton**

TEDDY EDWARDS bustles up to a table littered with discarded pizza circumferences — are we all wearing dentures? — and growls, "Can't stay long. This reed just *dab-ed!*" The Mississippi lad was in good shape, blowing husky blues into the garlicky corners of Pizza Express, bopping youthful top lines over Bill LeSage's vintage comping. Edwards, now 67, is in London promoting his first Antilles recording. Much of the promotional emphasis round *Mississippi Lad* has fallen on Tom Waits, who chips in a couple of songs. Edwards, though, is little disposed to envy, either on this or on the curious critical silence that seems to have surrounded him down the years.

"Tom's a sweet guy, a real good friend. We worked together before, on *One For The Heart*", for which they got an Academy soundtrack call-up, "and that was a very beautiful experience. And, hey, those were *my* songs he was singing on the album, so why should I get upset if the kids have heard of him before me?" And he cracks up telling the favourite one about Waits being thrown out of some swanky hotel for having holes in his shoes and cobwebs on his hat, and then watching the under-under-manager die the five thousand deaths of embarrassment when he realises he's pushed a Name and a PG out onto the sidewalk. "That's Tom, though, he doesn't care about stuff like that. Fact, he likes it."

Edwards doesn't care too much about what some might consider neglect. *Mississippi Lad* is his first outing for a while, and pairs the saxophonist with his old Seattle mate, bassist Leroy Vinnegar, who's been having a few health problems lately, but is still thumming out those big, juicy lines that even Jim Morrison liked. Edwards isn't troubled by fame or money. "I don't feel I lost out. Sure, I read things about how some young guy was 'influenced' by someone else, and I don't hear them talking about me. And sure, I'm not rich, but I get by. I never pushed myself out there, because I was always interested in other things: arranging, writing songs, writing for orchestra." Edwards is a brilliant, sometimes dazzling, arranger, with a remarkable feel for the emotional cadence of a tune. He's worked on pieces for full orchestra and for singer and band. He's even written a novel, which no-one has seen yet, but which sounds like *Round Midnight*, done "from the inside, yeah? and there's some sex, too, but tasteful, man, tasteful." I can't remember which comes first, but the book's related to a song, and back at the hotel, down in the bar, with half of the Japanese electronics industry watching from a nearby table, he sings it to me in a sweet, slightly quavering voice. All of it, every damn line. Mississippi Lad serenades blushing Cele. "Paris Blues", "Blue Paris", "Paris Nights"? Too damn overcome to remember, or care.



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NOW'S *presents . . .*
THE TIME



MEMOIRS OF A Country Gentlewoman

*In the mid-70s, Emmylou Harris won new audiences
for a music too long obscured by Nashville schmaltz.*

*Now putting out her 19th album,
she looks back – and forward – with Mike Fish.*

AMERICAN COUNTRY music is a maligned genre, ostensibly full of manufactured woes and heartbreaks-to-ordet, and famous mostly for its showbiz giants – Tammy Wynette, Dolly Parton, Willie Nelson, Conway Twitty – rather than its folkloric roots. Yet at a time when so many country songs are available for singing, parts of it have begun to take on the quality of a folk revival, particularly if one is prepared to look outside the narrow gauge of Nashville radio. The best new country records can pick and choose from some 60 years of 'modern' country songwriting. Neo-traditionalism can be as valid an option in country as it is in jazz.

The model for any such venture has surely, for the last 15 years, been the recording career of Emmylou Harris. As the singer and performer who won a new credibility for country in the mid-70s, Harris has continued to mix her choice of material until, after 18 albums, it resembles a formidable library of country developments. On her 19th record, *Emmylou Harris And The Nash Ramblers At The Ryman* (Reprise), she goes back as far as Stephen Foster ("Hard Times") and as near home as John Fogerty, Steve Earle and Bruce Springsteen.

At the very end of our talk, in trying to describe some of the intrinsic qualities of country, she inverts the customary belief as to what it plays on: "I think there's a certain restraint to country music, a certain economy of lyric and emotion that is still quite real and deep. It's the form itself which allows you to express something with an economy that still hits the mark. The way it goes straight to the heart without any waste is what appeals to me."

There is something of the scholar about this slight, gentle woman, with her spectacles and silver-streaked hair, and the live set at Nashville's Ryman Auditorium is a bit of a history lesson in the melding of country with pop and the strain of native Americana which runs through each. The performances are unfortunately rather studied too, and can't displace studio classics such as *Blue Kentucky Girl* or *Luxury Liner*. But Harris is singing with all her authority. She has a curiously double-sided voice, on the more sprightly tunes she can sound as girlish as any reedy young singer, but at ballad tempo she can be as old and grave as Joy Division's Ian Curtis, her vibrato

imparting a sense of lonely resignation which many of the younger pretenders of so-called 'New Country' must surely envy. Did she see her early progress, which predated all the fads instigated by Randy Travis, The Judds or Garth Brooks, as the work of someone ahead of her time?

"It's hard for me to think of myself as being ahead of my time, because I was inspired by Gram Parsons, who was definitely ahead of his time. I had what was a phenomenal success with music which he'd struggled to gain acceptance with. I certainly borrowed from his ideas and his sound. Gram was never even played on the radio."

Even so, as she admits, her records don't sell in mega-star quantities and she couldn't afford to take a year off the road even if she wanted to.

"I can probably sit down and sing 150 songs if I had to. I'm always looking for ten songs a year, for an album, choosing from maybe 20. The ten that don't get chosen, maybe they'll be brought down to five, and so then there's five that I have to look for another five to go with. I'm never done."

"If I've recorded a song," she reflects, "it's because it means something to me. I won't do it just for some kind of hit. And what it means might change from night to night. There's always one song in the show that will take off, and you never know what one it's going to be. I think songs are bottomless, in what they have to offer. It's like a passage that you read over and over and you're renewed by it."

Country offers the perfect repertory for that kind of thing, whether it be in the pens of the Louvin Brothers or Bill Monroe, Loretta Lynn or Townes Van Zandt, Charlie Poole or Emmylou herself. She put together a self-composed album once – *The Ballad Of Sally Rose*, which she remembers as "agony and pain and self-doubt" – but has otherwise done just the one tune here and there, such as the lovely "Tulsa Queen" from *Luxury Liner*. Prospecting for songs in the welter of new material which Nashville turns out can, though, be a depressing experience. So many production-line tunes clog the works that it's no surprise that country has a faceless reputation among many.

"A few years ago it seemed like it was going to be so different. I remember when Lyle Lovett and Nanci Griffiths and Steve Earle and The O'Kanes were all working in Nashville, it was very diverse stuff. But it's shut down again now. I keep hoping."

Making the connections is something she's very good at, whether it's hearing a high lonesome train whistle at the back of a Bruce Springsteen melody or making "Abraham Martin And John" speak in Tennessee accents. Fusion followers might like to alight here.

SOME RECORDS

Blue Kentucky Girl
Luxury Liner
Pieces Of The Sky
Quarter Moon In A Ten Cent Town
Brand New Dance (all Warner Bros)

NOW'S presents . . . JOHNNIE JOHNSON: piano man

THE TIME

by Phil McNeill



HE-E-E-E-ERE'S JOHNNIE. Who else would be wearing a gold-braided sailor's cap in the lobby of Tottenham Court Road's swanky Grafton Hotel? Freshly showered, Mr Johnson has grabbed an hour's shut-eye after a gruelling flight from St Louis, Missouri, via Chicago, and now he's rolling out to a chauffeured limo for the half-mile drive to Broadcasting House.

JJ is in London to promote his Elektra American Explores album *Johnnie B Bad*, on which his boogie woogie piano and sleepy voice are accompanied by Keith Richards, Eric Clapton and NRBQ. Despite good reviews, sales have been unspectacular, so Johnnie is making a lightning tour of BBC radio stations - 1, 2, 4, GLR - plus a bit of

press, a show at Hartsden's Mean Fiddler, and a spot of sightseeing. "Y'know ah bin here sev'l tahns but I never seen the Big Ben clock 'yt," he drawls. Today's date is *Kaleidoscope*, the Radio 4 arts programme.

As the studio engineer checks the sound level on a piano which she hadn't expected, Johnnie settles in and doodles a few bars. It's quite a shock to hear the man who played on every Chuck Berry record from "Maybellene" to "My Ding-a-Ling" languidly conjuring up Errol Garner's dreamy standard "Misty", but Mr Johnson is a man of many parts.

Born in West Virginia in 1924, he grew up listening to country music, happily it seems not to have left its mark, because when interviewer Robert Dawson-Scott optimistically asks Johnnie to demonstrate his hillbilly roots, the best the pianist can come up with is a truly terrible version of "She'll Be Coming Round The Mountain".

Things look up when Johnnie recounts the next stage of his story, listening to Teddy Wilson and Count Basie on the radio and then joining the US Marines Special Services big band in 1943, which he illustrates with a brief stroll through "Tuxedo Junction".

Pursuing the swing sound, Johnnie formed his own piano/sax/drums trio in St Louis. One night the sax player was ill, so he hired a guitarist called Chuck Berry for one night. "The public took on him because he was playing something different," Johnson recalls. "He had this hillbilly thing that went over with a bang.

"You had a variety of music back then," he adds, "and neither one overstood the other. Not like this rapping stuff that's overtaken everything." Johnson hates rap with a vengeance, so it pains him that some of his seven grandchildren (and one great-grandchild) are into it. "They say I'm old-fashioned but I keep on playing the blues and laughing to the bank."

Johnson is one of the last of the old school blues band pianists still operating, and he's in great demand, appearing with Clapton at his annual Albert Hall stunts and on John Lee Hooker's *Mr Lucky*. "He told me, 'Ev tahen ah make a record ah want you to git yo ass down there'," says Johnnie, slowing his lazy voice down even more to imitate Hooker.

Being a pianist in an electric blues band has never been easy. "I'm not putting flowers on my back or anything, but you have to be kind of an outstanding piano player to sit in with guitarists like Albert Collins, Buddy Guy, Keith Richards or Eric Clapton."

Possibly the most difficult guitarist of the lot to play with is Berry. Johnson was with him 28 years, working on music to go with the lyrics which Chuck would constantly jot down in his notebook. Berry took all the credit, and the royalties, but Johnson has good memories. "We socialised a lot. We'd go out to his park and shoot pool, play tennis, swim - we were more than just musician friends."

A week before Johnnie's show at Hartsden, Chuck Berry had toured the UK, rehashing the old classics with a little more enthusiasm than we've come to expect, but still going through the motions. The contrast with Johnson's relaxed set of blues, jazz, rock, and whatever takes his fancy could not be greater. Chuck may have the doh and the legend, but Johnnie Johnson has his freedom.



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TWO FESTIVALS — two sides of the same coin. Admittedly, these two incredible productions have similar musical commitments, share a number of common musicians and are both put together by equally informed, inspired people whose motivations are genuinely artistic, not careerist. In a word, they're both optimal festivals, full of diverse, thought-provoking music. All the same, they could hardly be more different. At base, each of the massive events is built on an entirely different presentational and organizational philosophy, supporting the singer's bylaw that there's more than one good way to kin a scar.

In its ninth manifestation, Canada's annual International Festival Musique Actuelle Victoriaville (FIMAV) arranged five multiple-course music meals, each lasting one day. "We're always thinking both vertically and horizontally," explains soft-spoken artistic director/head-honcho Michel Levasseur. In other words, the festival is meticulously mapped out, events coordinated from hour-to-hour and day-to-day. More than in the past, the festival took on a contoured air this year. Starting with a soloist, mid-day rose to peak with medium-sized and chamber groups, an evening rest with something quiet in the church of St. Victoire, followed by the "big event" and a nightclub nightcap rock concert to finish things out. Each day in V-ville is a finely-planned menu, and the festival's organizational principle is unquestionably compositional.

Morning solos were a new feature this year, and they worked very nicely to set the pace. German trombone player Konrad Bauer blew up a multiphonic storm that would have made Mangelsdorff gasp for air, integrating manual and electronic effects into a substantial, somewhat bluesy bluster. A set of holistic solos took Barry Guy back and forth between piccolo and full-sized basses, reading from a book of Native American poetry in between and conjuring a suite of five exquisite miniature improvisations that let every detail ring in passing. With minimal gear, Bob Ostertag engineered a compelling live-mix performance that went far beyond mere electronics show demo, nip-and-tucking snippets of Frith and Zorn into stereophonic sample-surgery. In his poignant composition "Sooner Or Later," Ostertag abstracted and extracted the tonal, rhythmic and percussive possibilities from a Salvadorian boy's voice — recorded as he buried his murdered father.

In the four times I've been to V-ville, afternoon concerts have proved some of the most memorable, and '91 was no exception. French saxophonists Michel Doneda and Daunik Lazzo and percussionist Ninh Le Quan were this year's festival find. Lazzo adapted Ayler's vibrato for use on alto, while Doneda's soprano combined a pleasing nasal sneer with bagpipish fingering. Together they marched through staccato tunes and piquant solos, pitched forward by Quan's astounding sensitivity to form, time and texture. A bit like Baby Sommer in Peking Opera timbres, Quan's persistence-of-pulse betrayed his familiarity with early John Cage, and his max-for-minimum approach to material allows him to use variations on the same cymbal-on-tom technique repeatedly without ever seeming redundant. From Switzerland came a very different

Globetrotting John Corbett reports on FIMAV from Victoriaville (in Canada) and October Meeting from Amsterdam (in, er, Holland).

Andrew Pathway



Steve Lay

trio composed of reedman Hans Koch, cellist Martin Schutz and drummer Fredy Studer. Like a roomier Curlew, they pounded out a wide assortment of rockish arrangements, partitioned into quick unison passages, chamber plateaus and rigorous free jazz blows.

A five-star set from Chicagoan Hal Russell and his trusty NRG Ensemble put a touch of "vaude" into V-ville, sporting an eclectic, hilarious, musically abundant collection of tunes. Bassist-guitarist Brian Sandstrom joined Russell on wah trumpet in the vaguely reminiscent "Luncheon," saxophonist Mars Williams blew tiny bubbles from a toy sax while Russell crooned a lunar dedication to Dorothy Lamour through a cardboard megaphone.

Closer to the R&R end of the spectrum, Doctor Nerve presented a wonderfully abrupt set of (purportedly mathematics-based) pieces from the pen of frenetic guitarist Nick Didkovsky. Great screeching bass-clarinet by Michael Lytle and smooth trumpet from Dave Douglas substantiated the claim that NYC + rock-jazz doesn't always add up to nothing. From the opposite coast, a late-night show with San Francisco's Non Credo show cased the haunting voice of Kira Vollmann and the clever drumming of Joseph Berardi in slightly sinister, enjoyably bent pop songs. A mischievous foursome of women, Montreal's own Justine conjured the

A Livewire Special

ghosts of Liliput and Essential Logic in a terrific touse of styles.

The grandiose evening events at the Grand Café were not the centerpiece for me this year. A dreadfully bland set by Dave Holland, Kevin Eubanks and Mino Cinelu, a Francophonic (and largely unmusical) meditation on Quebec and language by René Lussier and an uneven set by Anthony Davis Group occupied three of the five nights. But **Muhai Richard Abrams Octet** played brilliantly, bassist Brad Jones taking plenty of time for a raggedly right solo with and without the group, and Abrams and percussionist Warren Smith hooking up for a deep piano-vibraphone conversation re the blues. Japan's **After Dinner** was a winning choice for the fest finale, their theatrical music, soft humour and Haco's wax-paper voice all just the ticket to keep weary watchers awake.

WHILE LEVASSEUR has certainly looked to the continent for inspiration in making Victoria's North America's most European festival, nowhere on earth is there anything quite like Amsterdam's October Meeting, which happened for the second time since starting in 1987. If FIMAV comes, as it were, *prix fixe*, the October Meeting is a veritable all-you-can-eat smorgasbord, mixed and matched on the spot, cafeteria-style. Vaguely like Company Week with a thyroid condition, the Meeting assembled more than 50 musicians from the U.S. and Europe for a nine-day long trade convention.

Of course such an undertaking couldn't be without its mastermind — Huub van Riel, the Meeting's understated overseer — but the festival relied on musician input and spontaneous programming to choose the sequence and makeup of each day's music. At times, this promoted vagabond jam-sessioning and chronic under-rehearsal; but most of the time it allowed new and often unusual relationships to start and develop, let old matches strike up new flames and established an unparalleled all-around context for creativity. Each day at the October Meeting was full of the surprises, disappointments and delights befitting a freely improvised festival of fresh-cut music.

The festival utilized three halls in Amsterdam and ran concurrently in several other Dutch cities. An informal atmosphere at Cristofori piano emporium, where sets were chosen and led by the pianist *du jour*, produced some of the oddest encounters. Ageless imp **Han Bennink** commandeered the able (but inaudible) **Michiel Scheen's** run at the helm, the percussionist's newly found comrade-in-disarms, Siberian saxophonist **Vladimir Tolkachev** merrily joining the ragged shenanigans. **Cor Fuhler** organized a clunky, conversationalist quartet with unusually timed stops and starts. **Maarten Altena** detuning his bass against **Tristan Honsinger's** whiney cello and **Wim Janssen's** stripped trap kit. Pianist/electrojunk-dubmaster **Steve Beresford** invited the fabulously inventive drummer **Michael Vatcher** to match wits with **George E. Lewis**, who started the surreal set playing his

trombone while listening to Public Enemy on a Walkman. One of the finest meetings at the Meeting brought German pianist **Georg Gräwe** together with **Anthony Braxton** at the Cristofori. Swapping surging lines and knotted bends, they connected in a direct and captivating tangle, leaving no melodic strich untwisted.

At the BIMhuis, the festival's main stage, Gräwe was likewise stellar in an intense and singleminded set with **Evan Parker**, and when leading a group in his fleshy, Webernesque compositions. He also contributed to a three-piano rag-team match versus bonzo **Bennink**, which started in earnest with **Marilyn Crispell** and ended in a sublimely ridiculous **Bennink/Beresford** pyjama party. Elsewhere, **Beresford** made a mad dash from one musical thing to the next, pressing **Braxton** in a swiftly shifting duet and splicing box licks to chopsticks with jazzy altoist **Paul Termos**. **Bennink** appeared in three great quarters at the BIM, blowing a free jazz gasket with bass-clarinetist **Gianluigi Trovesi**, bassist **Arjen Gorter** and pianist **Horace Tapscott**, stretching standards with **Braxton**, **Mark Dresser** and **Misha Mengelberg** and doing the dada drummer in a bizarre concert with **Beresford**, **Gorter** and **Parker**, during which the saxophonist told a story about beats and nannies and quoted "Bye Bye Blackbird." **Bennink** and **Vatcher** zigzagged a sweet second-line snare for trumpeters **Claude Deppa**, **Horst Grabosch** and **Herb Robertson**, in a mardi-garde mixture of New Orleans and new jazz.

Steve Lacy featured his own compositions in a variety of settings, notably in a quartet with **Glerum**, **Tapscott** and **Vatcher**, duo with **Tapscott** and in a fantastic sax trio with Lithuanian soprano **Petras Vysniauskas** and my favorite new tenorist **Tobias Delius**. A nice improvisation with singer **Greetje Bimja** forced Lacy to explore the ultra-high range, and he also participated in a round-robin project that let **Richard Teitelbaum** sample and manipulate the playing of several saxophonists and, after he was located, the keyboard stylings of synth-hater **Mengelberg**, who poured over **Teitelbaum's** DX7 with nutty ingenuity. **Mengelberg** was just as oblique, insightful and Monkishly obstinate in a set with naïf-sophisticate **Sunny Murray**, deadpan interjections provided by moderating tenor saxophonist **Ab Baars**. When he wasn't soloing, pianist **Paul Bley** was found in some striking contexts with the **Amsterdam String Trio** and alongside masterful violinist **Mark Feldman**.

The phenomenal scope of the October Meeting is perhaps best expressed in one exceptional event, however, in which the Dutch political punk group **The Ex** — one of the most open and consistently inventive bands now rolling — collaborated with **Bimja**, **Bennink**, **Beresford**, **Baars**, **Deppa** and trombonist **Walter Wierbos**. The results were excellent. **Bimja** soared high with feedback, the horns splattered and honked a blue streak, and **Bennink's** breakneck off-time flurries threatened to send the whole ensemble akimbo. The marvellous encore **sax** **Bennink** and **Ex** drummer **Kat** side-by-side behind a plastic laundry basket on which they paraded out a simply beautiful duet.



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Why compromise?

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Maverick Dutch improviser Tristan Honsinger broke strings with Richard Scott. But who snapped his bow?

"YOU CAN tell it's funny-jazz night," says the woman serving our drinks, casting a cynical eye around the sparsely populated Victoriana of the Southport Arts Centre bar. How? "Half-empty," she laughs, "and no women, there's never any women. It could be a stag-night!" "Funny," muses the road-manager, "it's seen as being an exclusively male activity, like train-spotting or something . . ."

There is something terrible, appalling, inexplicable, in this admission. We all fall silent, and I spend some disturbed moments wondering what I am doing here and why free improvisation *matters* to me anyway.

I'm beginning to think Tristan Honsinger is not going to turn up for the interview when he walks through the door, catching me offguard. "Hello, how are you?" He says the words mockingly, very slowly, as if underlining each one, holding the phrase up for inspection. We talk against the backdrop of Mozart fed through limiters and filters, the sort of music you would expect to hear in the mental hospital in Kelsey's *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*.

I ADMIT to him that the first time I saw him play (with Derek Bailey, dancer Katy Duck and Company) I was shocked. I thought he was insane. The gibbering, twitching figure hunched over, scraping the cello, seemed to have completely dissolved the public line between what he felt and what he expressed; either an exceptionally pure form of art, or its negation. Either way it seemed frightening, even disgusting, yet also immensely exhilarating and liberating.

Do you think your music is extreme? Are you an extremist?

Uhm . . . I don't know . . . (Long pause.) I don't think I'm as extreme as someone who . . . who gives his undivided attention to what he is wearing. I think that is extreme.

[I ask about his musical background instead.]

My mother suggested I play cello and I enjoyed it a lot and so I decided to become a musician. I studied classical cello until I was 19. I was working in a conservatory. Then I left that and I left the United States for Canada, I kind of left everything behind. And I suppose because of leaving behind all the institutions that I had been a part of I became disinterested in that particular kind of music. So I stopped practising classical music and started practising improvisation. It just happened.

I think it had to do with a particular confusion and things being revealed to me in my life; politically and artistically. I went through a lot of changes and through reflection I lost interest in being an interpreter of the past and I became

interested in what was going on then. I don't think I disliked what I had learnt but I think I had to revolt against it, I had to say, "Well, this is not music. It *was* music, but it is not music." It was not *making* music, it was interpreting music and I realised that what I should be doing was *making* music. So I became interested in the people who were making music at the time, as contemporary composers and as improvisers, in jazz-people, and also in music from Asia, Africa, South America. In the '70s I discovered all that together, I hadn't even been exposed to bebop before that, so Cage, Stockhausen and Charlie Parker all came at once.

Had you had quite a cloistered or closeted existence until that point?

Yes, I had quite a closed musical experience, which is why I became confused when I started to ask questions about the way in which you *make* music. In quite a closeted way I would just improvise by myself, and I would make-believe that I was making music, that I was composing. But when I started to find my own way of making music I wanted to show everybody, to show them that this is the way you make music! And people started to say, Well, do you know Eric Dolphy? Have you heard Cecil Taylor? Or Albert Ayler? Evan Parker? Derek Bailey? Han Bennink? So I was exposed to all of these things and they reinforced what I was involved in. It was a kind of revelation that this was a legitimate way to enjoy yourself.

I got invited to play in Europe and I felt that that was really the place to develop the way that I was playing. European free improvisation is much closer to me and more exciting to me than, say, Coltrane-improvisations, which I was also quite influenced by. So I've been here ever since and I still feel that I can develop with the different people that live in Europe. I don't think I could do the same in America. The European lifestyle is very different from the American lifestyle, it has different rules . . .

"Lifestyle"? I'm not sure what you mean by that.

Since the 80s there has been a lot of questions amongst American players over the validity of improvisation as a way of presenting music. And I think that has a lot to do with the market and your relationship to it, or lack of relationship to it. In the 1980s there came a movement out of the States of people who were interested in the packaging of the whole thing, in the presentation of it. I questioned improvisation myself in this period and experimented with different forms of composition and so on, and I temporarily stopped playing with many of the European improvising musicians I had been playing with. But I think my own questioning of improvisation was more to do with philosophical questions, whereas I think amongst the musicians in America it had more to do with the Market and how they were going to earn a living. And the difference between the American and European ways of living is just that. The American way *demands* that you make a package. I've worked with some of the musicians who live in New York and we have talked about this and they felt



that they really had no choice but to sell and advertise their music. In America you have to have a grant or you have to make commercial concessions in the way that you present your work, otherwise people just ignore you. So I live here because I just don't want to be involved with my work in that way. I'm still very interested in different media and modes of presentation but I still consider the process of improvisation to be the most important thing in making music, just improvising, just playing music.

[At first he was distant and reticent, eyes fixed far away, but he has gradually warmed up, staring straight at me, smiling and gesticulating, trying to describe his fascination with the "process of improvisation" and the importance of "making music," two phrases he uses constantly. I push him to explain his fascination further.]

What is this process?

What actually happens when one improvises?

Well, you'll have to interpret this. My vocabulary . . . it doesn't mean the same thing to a lot of people . . . I think there are two different things and their intention is very interesting;

I'm interested in a structure, in the *formulation* of something, and I enjoy improvisation because I find myself formulating in a certain way; I find myself thinking, "Oh, I'm going to do *this* now." So you think about something, you see something, and then you operate, you have

Tristan Honsinger

the flash, like an abstract picture, and then you present it. An idea for me is a *pretension*, you discover something and you pretend to do it, until it sinks in, until you're actually doing it.

So the aspect of formulation is really a type of composition, or premeditation, but the *operation* we use to do that, the process of improvisation, is unpremeditated. And these two things talk to each other, there is always a conversation taking place between composition and improvisation.

So you don't present the thing and then try and work out what it was afterwards?

Well, sometimes I do. Sometimes all of a sudden I'm in this process which is without thought. And sometimes I stop because I don't know what the hell is going on!

I think a lot of the time you are moving backwards and forwards in the way you present the material. It's like an abstract picture that you get. You think, "I'm going to go *dee baa daa doo, dee baa daa*." And you play that and it influences a whole procession of events. And when that happens you go forward in time and you lose yourself in the presentation of this abstract thing. But when you start to think about what's happening there's a sort of reflective intellectual counterpart to that which takes you backwards in time. It becomes like a memory or a recollection.

So when you're improvising you're flitting between what you remember and what you imagine?

Yes. You have your own counterpoint, and in group playing

(for example I'm playing with Evan Parker and Alex McGuire tonight) there is a sort of interaction between that counterpoint and the music-making of someone else. You have your own counterpoint, your own linear and non-linear operations, and you are communicating those in relation to these other people's linear and non-linear counterpoints, their imaginations and memories and vocabularies.

I think I'm a kind of walking laboratory! And the music is the interrelationship and discussion between one laboratory and another, and how this communication can represent a unity.

I think the reasons why we enjoy improvisation so much could be this interdependence; the way a natural process of counterpoint manifests itself. And a lot of what happens in music is determined by the *differences* between the players. The music contains so many differences and even misunderstandings; it allows them to exist and to co-exist. There are so many different experiences and perspectives. That also seems to me to be important in a socio-political way, regarding how we feel about the times we live in. This particular way of making music is a good way for people of many different backgrounds and experiences to get together and play together. I've played this kind of music with so many different people; not just "Free Improvisers" but Brazilian musicians, African drummers, Bach specialists, and one exciting thing is that it shows how interested we can be in everybody else's way of making music, and how relative and related those ways are.

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New Note

I wonder. One of the problems people seem to have with free music, at least in Britain, is that it does not seem to be open and accessible in quite the way that you're suggesting. People sometimes suggest that it is an elitist, exclusive activity, a private linguistic exchange between virtuosi.

Well, I see virtuosity as an attitude, a *prejudice*, which might come either from the musician or the spectator. It infects both sides. People are self-indulgent in a virtuosic way only because they are a bit ashamed of what they are representing, and the audience also is a bit ashamed of what they are participating in. There is a kind of shame about exactly what we are doing there. It is something we use to protect ourselves in front of an audience, and the audience uses it to protect itself from us; a protective, distancing mechanism. But when as a player you can become part of the audience and the audience can become a part of you, then you can transcend those defences and all that business about virtuosity. That's my opinion anyway. But I don't really know how to talk about all these things, how to give everything a name. Talking about it and doing it are such different things.

Shall we leave it there then?

Yes I think so . . .

AN HOUR later he is on the stage with Alex McGuire on piano and Evan Parker on saxophone and the music is something else, completely blowing apart my earlier pessimism and faithlessness. Honsinger paces around like a hunchback – an inscrutable leer on his face – resting the cello on his forehead, as if trying to divine the centre of the music swirling around him. But the most striking thing about him is not his extraordinary stage-presence but the fact that his music seems to be entirely melodic. At one time melody seemed to be almost a minefield to be avoided for free improvisers, but the music taking shape in front of me seems to take a natural melodic polyphony as its basic ground.

Honsinger plays wholly, to the edges of his capacities, not just technical but emotional and psychological, exploring the limits of expression and communication; feet flapping like duck's wings, head jerking back and forth, sometimes shouting and spluttering and laughing at . . .

At what? Laughing maybe at the sheer multiplicity of lines that free music can hold at any single moment, laughing with joy at this music which seems so complicated at a distance but so simple close up, this music which is what it is and where it is and confounds the attempts we make in speech and writing to reduce it into something more easily containable and definable . . .

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Company 5, with Derek Bailey, Evan Parker, Anthony Braxton, Steve Lacy etc. (Incus)

Initiation of Life, with Steve Beresford, David Toop, Toshinori Kondo (Y Records)

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TUBULAR TUNES

Barry Witherden meets Ron Geesin, composer, publisher, inventor, performer and legendary progressive funnyman. But Mark Douet took the pictures.

ONE OF the aphorisms that covered the walls of Ron Geesin's recent exhibition at the Slade School of Art suggested that if your body is still in working order when you die then you haven't been using it properly. Geesin is a man of many creative parts, and he is busy wearing most of them out.

He started out as a surrealist painter, getting involved in the public performance of music almost by accident. In 1961 a traditional jazz band called the Original Downtown Syncopators played at a Glasgow tennis club and Geesin was drafted in to take over the piano stool. This meant, he says, having to learn to play the black notes as he went along. The other members of the band were not planning careers in music: they were having their last adolescent fling before settling down (shades of *Swan Klang's* *Combo*), whereas Ron decided to stick with music. Geesin moved to London with the band and spent the next few years establishing a reputation as (to cram together several of the descriptions he most dislikes) an uncategorisable, eccentric experimentalist or (to stab at a label he may not object to) an individualist.

In 1967, his first album (and Transatlantic's first stereo release) appeared. *A Raise Of Eyebrows* exhibited the Geesin humour and approach to titling which led some commentators to assume there is nothing serious about his work. It's a problem for many people to accept the simultaneous presence of humour and serious intent in the same piece of work, but Ron has always been intent on keeping the balance. He is a great admirer of Gerard Hoffnung, whose legendary South Bank concerts in the late 50s he considers brought a richness to classical music, saving the "serious music" public from getting too po-faced.

The humour comes out in the titles, which often have a subversive function rather than just an intent to amuse. When he started doing sessions for John Peel he was asked to provide titles to ease the Beeb's book-keeping. The names he came up with often had no real relation to the music, and when he is asked what he had in mind when writing a particular piece of

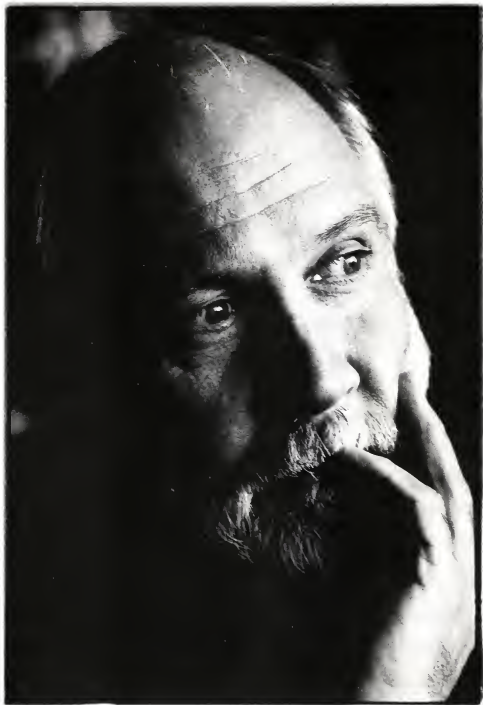
music he will usually say it was, purely, simply and logically, the music. On the whole this applies even to his work for films and TV. Again, the pieces of music and their titles frequently subvert the image, especially on projects where he has been unhappy with the way the work progressed. Hints of this surface in the notes to *Funny Women*, his new CD of compositions drawn from the last decade. Yet (to follow through the alliteration) he finds this friction fruitful. It's what he terms "essential abrasion" for, whilst it is always the individual which interests him, and whilst he does not relate to groups, he sees the real creative energy coming from the individual struggling out of the group - Louis Armstrong emerging from

the King Oliver band, Coleman Hawkins from Fletcher Henderson's - using the group framework as a foil for his or her own ideas.

It was Roger Waters, who Geesin saw as the "emotional substance" of the group, which attracted him to working with Pink Floyd. In 1970 he and Waters cut *Music From The Body*, reissued on a Harvest CD in 1989, and then Waters and Nick Mason arranged for him to collaborate on a large composition which became *Atou Hart Mother*. Ron did a great deal of work on the piece, although you needed to peer at the small print on the record label to find his name at all. In future he should get proper credit, since he has just set up his own imprint, Headscope, to publish books and records: currently all his own work but this is not the exclusive purpose. The first release is *Funny Women*, an entertaining and witty collection showcasing pieces written for films, for the purpose of experimenting with new technology or simply for the sake of the music itself.

Currently Ron is negotiating for the re-building of his Tune Tube in the Far East. The Tube was originally commissioned for a hands-on exhibition at Glasgow's McLennan Gallery, but since then none of Britain's esteemed and adventurous art or science sponsoring bodies has evinced any interest, and the invention languishes in the Gallery's basement. To describe it simply, the Tube is five metres long and two-and-a-half metres in diameter and interacts with the movements of people passing through it to produce sounds and light patterns. The Glasgow installation was a great success and was visited by several groups of blind and autistic people. He says, "In this gadget there is no *dis*-abled. If you've got a big toe that works, move it." Given the finance Ron hopes to develop the Tube to respond to colours and body temperature, and aims to modify it to appeal more to hearing-impaired people.

Ron's videotape of the Tube in action makes you itch to visit it, but true to this country's tradition of ignoring the potential of any imaginative homegrown invention, there seems little chance of doing so. In the meantime, with winter arriving, warm your head and ears round the new CD by the man whom John Peel once called "the most startling and original performer in the country". *



"MAYBE TO relate to this album you need to have been whacked around by life a bit," says Lou Reed. "This record won't mean that much to an eight-year-old, except you can just luxuriate in the sound, it's so thick and defined and dimensional. But an eight-year-old won't have the faintest idea what I'm talking about. And I'm not trying to offend eight-year-olds," he adds, the faintest of smiles flickering across his impassive features. "Maybe there's a very sophisticated one out there somewhere."

Where *New York* railed against the here-and-now specifics of Manhattan's disintegrating social fabric, *Magic And Loss* is Lou Reed raging against the limits of existence, the absolutes of life and death, it's also a glowing tribute (literally glowing, since the playing is luminous) to two friends who died recently. One was Doc Pomus, a songwriter friend from Reed's pre-Velvet Underground days as a salaried songsmith. The other, "Rita", was "just a friend. Not a celebrity, put it that way."

New York was socially engaged and street-real: *Magic And Loss* is a spiritual document. "Power And Glory", for instance, trembles with a palpable feeling of revelation: "I was captured by a larger moment/I was seized by divinity's hot breath/Gorged like a lion of experience . . . I wanted all of it, not some of it". The song teems with mystical imagery of metamorphosis, tooted in the paradoxes of terminal illness ("I saw a great man turn into a little child") and of radiation therapy ("The same power that burned Hiroshima/Causing three-legged babies and death/Shrunk to the size of a nickel/To help him regain his breath").

"I came to understand that the album was about transformation," explains Reed. "Alchemy. The purpose of alchemy wasn't to transform lead into gold, that was just one example of the process, to be used later to transform yourself. I call the album *Magic And Loss* because that experience can be taken two ways. That's why the song 'Power And Glory' occurs twice, in different forms. A whole different tempo, a whole different way of looking at the exact same thing. The way they faced illness and death was very inspirational. In the end, it was a magical experience. A positive experience. Positive to have known them, positive to have watched them go through this. When, to quote myself, 'you loved the life others throw away nightly', I thought they were giants."

Magic And Loss, says Reed, is "an extension of the *Songs For*



Lou Reed is one of the few 60s figures who has kept up any serious exploration of rock's sounds and words. In this exclusive New York interview, he lectures, Simon Reynolds on Death, Transfiguration, and other technical matters.

ALCHEMICAL ENGINEERING



Drella album which was an extension of *New York* — the idea of a thematically whole album. Right now, I'm not interested in the idea of 12 or so disparate songs." Each song has a subtitle, "like in a novel, at the head of each chapter, a little phrase explaining what it is".

The album conducts you methodically through each stage of terminal illness and bereavement. There's the morbid, unbidden reveries of "Dreamin'", perhaps the most lovely song on the record, with its braid of wavering guitar-synth and tremulous, plangent, pure Velvets guitar. "Goodbye Miss" vividly evokes the awkward discomfort of the funeral service, Reed bemoaning the disparity between its dour gravity and the feisty, irrepressible good humour of the dearly departed. "You, you would have made a joke/Isn't this something you'd say/Tomorrow I'm smoke".

"BOTH OF them made jokes straight the way through," recalls Reed. "It's unbelievable. I had said there's this great widescreen colour TV I could get for you, and I'll hook up all the wiring for you. And they said, Lou, this is not the time for long-term investments. Joking. I think that's magnificent. I just think some people are giants. You may never hear of them, but they just have this thing. They're like the sun, they're just glowing all the time. They stay that way. When they get hurt, they don't suddenly turn into this other thing. It would be totally understandable. If I get a flu, I start whining!"

Then there's "Warrior King", which documents the most confusing and ostensibly illogical symptom of mourning, a desire for bloody revenge that can't be slaked because it's intransigent.

"The character singing is very mad at the elements that have attacked and killed his friends. But there's no person to aim it at, with terminal illness. It's like, if you could take a physical, malleable form, I'd take you in an alley and do this, and this, and this. It's if I could, if I could . . . but with death, you can't. So it's that anger that causes the song afterwards, "Harry's Circumcision", because you can't walk around with that anger in your heart. It causes these very negative thoughts, which is what "Harry's Circumcision" is all about, taken to its natural conclusion (attempted suicide)." According to Lou's theory, you can't just stay in that mental state, you've got to go beyond that. Which is what happens on the album.

"The songs are in a particular order for a purpose, it's supposed to take you to a certain place. And that's a really positive state. This is not a negative, down album. I'm not the only person in the world who's experienced loss. Everybody has a brother or sister or father or friend somewhere that died and that means they can understand. You just have to have been alive for a little while to experience it. It's not a mystery. It's real life giving you a real hello, welcome to the club."

That "certain place" is reached on the final track, "Magic And Loss", a spectral sleepwalk of mystic jazz-metal whose lyrics suggest reconciliation. It hints that Reed's even come to

believe in some kind of afterlife: there's a door up ahead, not a wall.

"You can call it a spiritual awakening, or whatever you like. Things look a certain way, like you're driving directly into a wall. There's nothing you can do about it. But no, it's a door. You just didn't see it. And a door, obviously, can be opened. It depends how you look at things. The song "Magic And Loss" I find very uplifting. It's resolving the whole album. You don't wanna come to the end of that experience still feeling splintered. You have to reconcile yourself to it. But hopefully, it's a reconciliation with a lot of positive aspects to it. It's an inspiring thing, what I witnessed. I want to be as good as them. These were the people who were inspiring to me right the way through to the last minute. It's really sad not being able to call Doc Pomus up right to this day, because he was like the sun. He was just one of those people that you feel good when you're around them. You could be feeling bad, and you go visit them and they say two words and you feel good. But then, it would have been even worse not to have known him at all. That's part of the whole magic and loss deal."

LOFTY SPECULATIONS and spiritual quandaries withal, Lou Reed spends the bulk of his time grappling with the gritty-gritty technicalities of making records. If the truth be known, he's a bit of a muso. Way back in his decadent days, Reed could drive Lester Bangs up the wall by discoursing interminably about how George Benson invented a totally clean, totally pure amplifier. Even the unendurable din of *Metal Machine Music* was informed by audiophile obsessions. The interview has hardly begun before Reed launches into a diatribe about rock critics' cloth-eared ignorance about sound.

"It always amazes me — and this not meant to be offensive — how little you people hear, on a tonal level. I find the sound on the new album awe-inspiring. There is a radiance to it, an enormous tonal range. It's like a stereo image. It's very 3D-ish. You can actually walk around it. It has the sonic depth to match its subject matter. This time, I've got the tones I haven't quite been able to before. On the sleeve of *New York* I wrote about the equipment we used, and I was trying to let the people know there's a lot going into the choices that are there. It's not as spontaneous as it seems."

Reed explains, at considerable length, about the "incalculable hours" he and co-producer, second guitarist Mike Rathke, spent on research, refinement, and modification of equipment. He describes how the kind of tape you use, the pick-ups, even the wood in the guitar can all make a difference. It's all very incongruous. The reality of Lou Reed-as-technical-boffin jars discordantly with the image of Lou-Reed-as-icon-of-street-romanticism. In the post-punk scheme, technique and technology are generally deemed to be enemies of the gritty authenticity that's allegedly the heart of rock'n'roll. Lou Reed and the Velvet Underground, for all the arty input, are generally taken to represent the epitome of this raw expression. Because they tend to come from a Literit or humanities background, rock critics find the nuts-and-bolts side of

Lou Reed

music-making demystifying. But for Lou Reed, it's where the mystery is painstakingly constructed. It's a sort of science of magic.

"No one knows that better than me because I know how much magic disappears when the technical stuff is wrong. At the end of the whole process, when you listen to your finished CD, you realise that you've got a cassette from the very beginning that sounds 100 times better. So what happened? Why is it so cold sounding? There's no dimension. That guitar hurts my ears. Where's the bass? Why is it muddy? If you get into the why of it, it's fascinating. And it's a real thrill if you finally get it to sound right. The only way to learn is to make records. But most people aren't really interested, they think the magic is all over there, and the technical stuff is another matter, and if you have a good producer that's all taken care of. The writing and performance are one thing, but if the production and technical side aren't there . . . and I've got the records to prove it. A lot of my records, 'til I could get a handle on it, aren't even produced, except in the sense that I wouldn't let the producers do anything, rather than let them do it wrong. And the records are completely dry, 'cos I didn't know how it worked, but I knew they'd fuck it up so I wouldn't let 'em do anything. It takes a long time to learn, when you're making a record every couple of years. It's fascinating, but it's like this onion with all these skins,

endless."

FAR MORE congruent with Lou Reed's received image is the fact that Penguin are soon to publish *Between Thought And Expression*, a selection of lyrics that he felt could stand up on their own without music. It's strange that it took him so long to get between book covers, considering that back in 1979 he declared "my expectations are very high . . . to be the greatest writer that ever lived on God's earth. In other words I'm talking about Shakespeare, Dostoevsky . . ."

"That was just me shooting my mouth off, but it is a real dream. To do something that's not disposable, that could really hold its own for ever. It sounds kind of glib and pretentious, to say you want to be up there with Dostoevsky, but I would. I wanna create art that will live forever, whether it's on record or on the printed page. That's why I avoid slang, any expression that will date, like 'dig it' or 'freaked out'."

Despite his aversion to transient argot, Reed's lyrics exude a great sense of demotic, everyday speech, rather than the ornately poeticised. The same love of "conversational tone", the faltering rhythm of thoughts taking shape as they're spoken, informed his interviews with novelist Hubert Selby (*Last Exit To Brooklyn*), and Czechoslovakian playwright turned President, Vaclav Havel, both of which are included in *Between Thought And Expression*.

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"I don't like it when the interview's so cleaned up that both interviewer and subject sound like the same person. I like to keep the real rhythm of the way the person talks. With Selby, hopefully from the interview I did with him, you can hear him think. The way he puts things together I found really fascinating. Hearing a writer think like that, you can see why he's a great writer."

The most interesting thing to emerge in the Havel encounter was the Velvet Underground's indirect effect on history. First there was a Czech avant-rock band called Plastic People Of The Universe who covered Velvet Underground songs, and then they got sent to prison, and then the campaign to get them released evolved into Charter 77, which in turn led to Czechoslovakia's "Velvet Revolution". That's a coincidence (the "Velvet" means soft, bloodless) but a beautiful one, and it highlights the way a band like the Velvet Underground, by symbolising absolute possibility, can be "political" without being politicised, can change things without being explicitly consciousness-raising. Most touching of all for Reed is the fact that the Charter 77 activists recited his lyrics to themselves as a source of spiritual fortitude.

"I have the handprinted book of my lyrics, in Czechoslovakian, that Havel gave me, and it's an astonishing thing. It meant so much to them. Music was a real expression to them of social change. We walked over this beautiful bridge in Prague and they told me that a few years ago you wouldn't have seen a guitarist on that bridge with kids singing. It was considered dangerous. Where people get together is where ideas are generated, and that's a problem for totalitarian governments. It's hard for us to even conceive of living under such constraints."

When he goes about his daily life, or looks in the mirror, does he feel mythic, an icon?

"I don't even relate to that. It doesn't even cross my mind. What I'm really interested in is stuff like analogue to digital converter shoot-outs. I don't even conceive of that other stuff at all. It's like, they must mean someone else. It doesn't compute with me, simply because I know how hard I have to work with the limitations that I have, just to get to where I am."

Nonetheless, Lou Reed is one of those artists that people of a certain generation tell the time by. Like Neil Young, Reed is one of the few figures from his era to survive with credibility intact and music in working order. But Reed denies feeling any responsibility to the people who look to him for the next big statement. "It wouldn't even dawn on me," he shrugs. He also claims to be oblivious to the legions of copyists who have turned "Lou Reed" into a genre.

"I always thought of it as a situation where some really obvious ideas were sitting there, and I happened to be one of the guys who happened to hit the dirt first. It's like, hey, look at that, there's a whole continent over there. It seemed really obvious. Then you start listening to Brecht or Weill, and you realise quite a few people have been running around there." *

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My Funny Valentine

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The image shows a musical score for the song "My Funny Valentine". The score is written for voice and piano. It includes various musical notations such as treble and bass clefs, time signatures, and chord symbols (e.g., Cm, Fm7, G7, Cm7, Cm6, Bb7sus, Bb7). A solid silver heart, which is the product being advertised, is placed over the center of the musical score. The heart has the "M & W" logo of Mappin & Webb on it.

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LOVING THE ALIEN –

Black Science Fiction Mark Sinker uncovers ideas in

black music – about present identity and future possibility – that run counter to all the comfortable old stories.

in advance of the landing

"IN THE meantime," he said, speaking relentlessly but mesmerically softly, as gurus will, "I finally went to Chicago. I determined not to be a musician – and the next thing you know, I had these space experiences. "The first experience, I wrote it down. Very graphically: it's impressed on my mind. I did go out to space through what I thought was a giant spotlight shining on me. I was told that they wanted me to go somewhere, that I had the type of mind that could do something to help the planet. I was going out, but it was a very dangerous journey – I had to have a procedure and a discipline, I had to go up there like that" – and the old man holds his arms out in front of him, like a zombie or a mummy – "in order to prevent any part of my body from touching the outside, because I was going through time-zones, and if any part of my body touched the outside I couldn't get it back."

Softly, till you have the habit of compulsive silence and listening attention yourself, Sun Ra mumbles on: "So this spotlight – it seemed like a spotlight, but now I called it the energy car – it shined down on me, and my body was changed into beams of light. Now you see, when a spotlight shines, you can see little specks of dust. It gave that appearance, it could see through myself, and I went up at terrific speed to another dimension, another planet."

All across middle America, cheerful, hopeful nurbal folkarr celebrates the coming invasion; the unearthly saucermen

who'll save the world's bacon: plastic, chrome and concrete rocket-sculptures dot the landscape, dwarfing trailerparks and diners countrywide. If it isn't speaking with Jesus or sighting Elvis, it's men from Mars, and every week since the Atom Age began, someone else has come forward who's been kidnapped and trained in ways and means and returned to save the Earth.

"So then they called my name, and I realised I was alone, a long way from here, and I don't know what they wanted of me – and I stayed up in the dark. And they called my name again, but I refused to answer. And all at once they teleported me down to where they were. In one split second I was up there; next I was down here. So they got that power. Then they talked to me, they had antennas, and they had red eyes that glow like thar. And they wanted me to be one of them, and I said no, it's natural for you to be like that, but it might hurt me if you gave me some. Anyway, they talked to me about this planet, and the way it was headed and what was going to happen to teenagers, and governments, and people. They said they wanted me to talk to them. And I said I wasn't interested."

That's the difference. It hardly matters whether the story's true or figurative, hallucination or bad neural wiring, that's the point where the Jazzman breaks away from the standard riff and makes up his own melody. Here, in his front room, all cluttered up with disciples' pictures of himself as Egyptian deity, as cosmic explorer, as mystic messenger, he tells the ordinary story of an ordinary abduction by aliens and then –



Nick White

Ra under strange skies

because he is Le Son'y Ra, and not as other corny tale-spinners – he tells how he turned down the offer of Messiahship.

the hour of chaos

"W H A T A R E the roots that clutch, what branches grow? Out of this story rubbish?" Eliot's Wasteland was cultural, a blasted reach of dead fragments (the narrative borrows its drive – and key items of its imagery – from Bram Stoker's *Dracula*). "Your home is my home/Welcome To The Terrordome!" Public Enemy's Wasteland seems very real and very present: whole blocks burned in the black ghettos in the 60s, and in many the rubble's still there, the dominant feature in the crackhammered badlands.

But "Welcome To The Terrordome", Chuck D's hurtling, desperate masterpiece, while it masquerades as one more PoMo collage of Pop-Cultural bits and pieces (James Brown slammed into *The Price Is Right*), in fact has its own utterly present momentum. Its portrait of urban life – as combined videogame warzone and unlicensed gameshow-without-letup ("Come on down! Get down!") – owes much to comic book science fiction, sure. HipHop is in the grand syncretic tradition of bebop, not ashamed to acknowledge that technological means and initial building material are always simply what falls to hand; but that meaning is nonetheless a matter of energetic and visionary redeployment, not who first owned or made this or that fragment.

The triumph of black American culture is that, forcibly stripped by the Middle Passage and Slavery Days of any direct connection with African mother culture, it has nonetheless

survived; by syncretism, by *bricolage*, by a day-to-day programme of appropriation and adaptation as resourcefully broad-minded as any in history. But still, the humane tradition – of warmth, community hope and aspiration – central to the gospel roots soul of the southern black tradition is, if treated as the principle that underlies all, a way of hiding from these facts in plain sight. That this tradition is no more uniquely "African" than the Nation of Islam is "Islamic", that this culture is still – in its constituent parts – very much a patchwork borrowing; necessary of course for physical and psychic survival, but not an unarguable continuity.

The advantage of Science Fiction as a point of cultural departure is that it allows for a series of worst-case futures – of hells-on-Earth and being in them – which are woven into every kind of everyday present reality (on a purely technical level, value in SF is measured against the fictional creation of other worlds, or people, believable no matter how different). The central fact in Black Science Fiction – self-consciously so named or not – is an acknowledgement that Apocalypse already happened: that (in PE's phrase) Armageddon *been in effect*. Black SF writers – Samuel Delany, Octavia Butler – write about worlds after catastrophic disaster; about the modalities of identity without hope of resolution, where race and nation and neighbourhood and family are none of them enough to obviate betrayal ("Every brother ain't a brother cause a colour! Just as well could be undercover" raps Chuck D in "Terrordome").

In its Golden Age, where science fiction promised itself – The Shape Of Things To Come – a world without war, hurt or hunger (also, raceless enough, without black folks). In its paranoid phase – Invasion Of The Body Snatchers – the political hysteria (being swamped by Red or Yellow perils) is endlessly animated by an unuse only memorably articulated by PE two years back: Fear Of A Black Planet. In its present form – Cyberpunk – white SF, or anyway its radical leading edge, is arguing that the planet, already turned Black, must embrace rather than resist this. That back-to-nature pastoralism is intrinsically reactionary, that only ways of technological interaction inherited from the jazz and now the rap avant garde can reintegrate humanity with the runaway machine age.

cyberjunky spiritworld

T H E I M A G E of black music which the first and most influential hipster-translators – the Beats – gave us (black musicians as long on passionate suffering, unmarred by intellectualism) leaves little room for any of Science Fiction's concerns. This same idea sells the cutting edge of today's black music short indeed.

One observer, though, dispensed with the "Noble Savage" of Kerouac's or Mailer's beatnik sentimentality. William Burroughs' future-present nightmares – lurid with violence, weird sex, streetpunk survival strategies and intensely technologised underworld economies, where meaningless additions are fostered by cynically amoral authorities – may not,

Black Science Fiction

for the longest time, have chimed with the best hopes and intentions of the bebop revolutionaries. In retrospect it seems not only horribly, sardonically prescient ("Welcome To The Terrordome"), but very much in keeping with the bitter, most self-destructive edge of bop's alien tongues.

Such brazen and courageous celebration of doomed difference is the flipside of assimilation, of being all that you weren't expected to be. Monsters from a nation's Id suddenly and justly demanding equal time as thinking and dreaming and sexual citizens. Hor, weird, different and better: the thrill and the threat of these Beings from Another Place wasn't that they'd be utterly unlike and intolerably horrible, but they'd be like us, only more so.

Cyberpunk's other acknowledged forebears – Delany and Philip Dick – constantly ask the question Slavery first posed: what does it mean to be human? Incapable of sentimentality, Burroughs provides a terrible answer: it means addiction. Because Junkies have needs only this utterly debased and evil system can provide, Separatism can never be an option. But the only way "up" is pull everyone else "down": "My home is your home"

Which of course may not tell you everything about such restlessly questing black SF visionaries as Coltrane or Braxton (or Miles or Wayne Shorter), but it tells you more than the already far-too-comfortable Great Soul myth (where if only you the listener could crack the expressive code, you'd be trans-

ported to planes of higher something or other). If flight is one part of their creative metaphor, then it's always flight from a social disaster that's *keeping pace with them as they flee*.

There is no rest in Coltrane's *Interstellar Space* – the Space Race is no more Boys Own fun for him than it was for his most important teacher, Ra (the man who weaned him off his addiction, or anyway rerouted it from chemistry to metaphysics). Think of that late late recording, the interminable and maddening "Saturn", where inner and outer space fuse as he warp-drives to the core of the galaxy and the core of the soul: Coltrane is incomprehensible unless you see him as Ra's greatest pupil, terminally impatient with limits, with the trivial categories and opposites within Earthly language, and yet inhumanly patient with the fact that such things won't be transcended down here on this plane.

Others find it easier. Not all Black Science Fiction is so ironbanded and bleak as Coltrane: Hendrix the utterly fluid spacepoet glided somewhere beyond black and white, masculine and feminine, noise and grace, while Earth Wind and Fire's 31st Century Egyptology at least pretends, in its silly hermetic way, to possible heavens here below.

we are the robots

"I N M I A M I", rap is strongly influenced by the closeness of Cuba and Jamaica; in Orange Country, young Vietnamese-

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American girls are forming gangs like the Dirty Punks, following an age-old tradition of new immigrants but expressing it in a form that Hollywood tells us is exclusively Black and Hispanic. Ball Adler – rap archivist, writer and publicist – has written that ‘HipHop’s present-day cultural nationalists argue that so-called ‘blackness’ is as much a matter of cultural identification as it is of skin colour and that, by that measure, there are *millions* of suspiciously light-skinned young black teens roaming around *right now*, undetected and unsupervised.’ (David Toop, *The Rap Attack II*)

When Afrika Bambaata dropped the melody from Kraftwerk’s ‘Trans Europe Express’ into Soul Sonic Force’s ‘Planet Rock’, he let loose something so big he could hardly keep up with it (none of the founders of what became HipHop have really continued to flourish: they had too completely transformed the world they knew how to move in). Kraftwerk, that is, who only half-ironically celebrate the excellence of robot-being (robot: from a Czech word meaning ‘worker’ – or ‘slave’). Kraftwerk, whose cool cyborg glide could surely not be more European/Palladian. Techno, Detroit’s 80s/90s black electrowave, explicitly and contemptuously refused community with Motown and motorcity gospel for Gary ‘Me I Disconnect From You’ Numan. And yet, as a wordless total immersion culture of bear-pleasure, where the warehouse party functions as purely temporary paradisiac freedom, beyond sexual rules or racial boundaries, Techno admits a yearning for these impossible SF futures.

HipHop and Techno between them – genres that focus on wharf-rat underclass individuals seizing on the most up-to-date technology, to combat some ever more monolithic, globally interlinked InfoTec state – are Cyberpunk come to life, by turns grindingly bleak (as chroniclers of the present) and deliriously optimistic (as harbingers of the future). Whereas music generally reaches for its emotional truths into the past, nonetheless it’s invariably a species of jazz that functions as the trans-galactic common entertainment language to come. Think of the bar scene in *Star Wars*: and recall that Steve Coleman has cited this – or a dream-version of it – as a primary influence on the direction his music has to take.

The ships landed long ago: they already laid waste whole societies, abducted and genetically altered swarthes of citizenry, imposed without surcease their values. Africa and America – and so by extension Europe and Asia – are already in their various ways *Alien Nation*. No return to normal is possible: what ‘normal’ is there to return to? Part of the story of black music (the affirmative, soul-gospel aspect) has always been this – that losing everything except basic dignity and decency is potentially a survivable disaster.

The other part – as told so obliquely by Ra, Coltrane, Braxton, Delany, Ishmael Reed, and doubtless many others less easily seen than this – is that staying true to the best in yourself may mean when everything can so cunningly imitate everything else, talking in dark, crazed, visionary tongues for a season.

EARTHA KITT THINKING JAZZ



Rolf Kühn

Joachim Kühn

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IT'S BEEN called Hardcore House, Progressive Underground, Belgian Bodybeat, and even, thanks to the relentless rhythms and sci-fi iconography, the new heavy metal. Whatever the label it's clear that Techno means more than just a passing case of what Kraftwerk might term the boom being tschaks.

If it's not just programmed machine noises, what is it? "Techno music is music made by technology", says DJ Colin Faver. Truism, surely? With a Tuesday night show on Kiss FM and regular gigs throughout British clubland, Faver's probably Britain's champion Techno-jock, and, with more years at the top than you'd care to count, sharp enough to qualify his definitions. Press him further. If it's defined by something other than its means of construction, what? "It's music that moves forwards. Progressive dance music". And progress, that means more than what it's made up of, or how — but *what happens next*.

Really, though, what Techno does depends on where you're standing. It can be liberating, a shamanistic invitation to the dance, a soundtrack to a science fiction world. It can be, and often is these days, numbing dross. Techno is a careless umbrella term, expanding to cover white and black streetwaves from ponderous Pink Tangerine Floyd Dreams to disco, from electro-pop and electro-rap to Acid House. With its predilection for tape loops and sequencers, you could argue a case for Techno as a new minimalism. Not the abstract sculptures of classical minimalism, where an insistence and delight in manipulating process spoke eloquently about contexts, but a *post hoc* creation of structure that repeats, yes, but

neither examines nor understands.

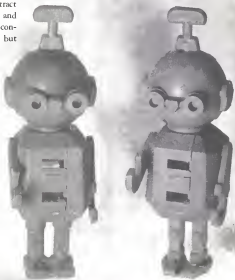
The sound of Techno, its "vocabulary", range from laconic, moody sweeps of synth, to (increasingly) stabbing orchestral furore, all harnessed to rhythms sped beyond endurance. A recent issue of the DJ's weekly, *Mixmag*, attempt to log them. There's those surging, whooshing sounds — the 'Belgian Hoover' effect. The cheering, ecstatic crowd bursts. Sweeping operatic choruses in search of that Old Spice effect, Hammer House of Horror chords in lieu of some diabolic interval.

One thing does remain constant: the desire of the composers/mechanics to hide behind identities that suggest cyborg dreams. From the old, pre-Techno, electropop age, DAF, Yello, Kraftwerk, Telex, M, YMO and Depeche Mode shadow today's aliases — Ubik, State 808, Code 6, Space Cube, UHF, LFO, TFO, Iso Tonik, Prodigy — cartoon robot alter-egos, encoding the same computerworld hopes for transcending the temporal and the corporeal.

OF THE few certainties surrounding techno, the central point is, ten years ago, three black kids from Belleville High, in a Detroit far removed from Motown, sett out to soundtrack atmospheres and dreams, and, doing so, changed music's course. Detrick May (who several years later as Rhythm Is

THE GREAT *bleep*FORWARDS

Dramatically influential, and yet quite unlike any "black" music before it, Detroit Techno once looked set to make its mark, as streetwave minimalism and cyberpunk soul.



A decade later, Louise Gray wonders if it's lost its way.

Rhythm would have clubland at his feet) remembers *Akara* comic books, *Bladerunner* reruns and lifting hi-tech information from the sleeve notes of albums like Moroder's *E-MC²*.

Sitting around with his friends Juan Atkins and Kevin Saunderson, listening to Devo, Yello, Stevie Wonder's *Secret Life Of Plants*, tinkering with basic 80s music technology (a Korg MS10 synth, a mixer and a couple of cassette decks) and planning a life that would lead to studio engineer jobs, maybe a little college football on the way. A friend from Michigan, Rick Davies, provided the x-factor. Atkins remembers Davies as "reserved, isolated, weird". On the other hand, Davies had machines Atkins had only dreamt of. Not to mention his own dreams.

"Rick was to be the biggest influence on Juan," May has said. "He'd been involved in the Vietnam war and was sort of spaced out. He had an image of something none of us had ever heard of before. We were 16, 17".

A year later (1981) the images went public. With \$500 borrowed from his grandmother, Atkins and Davies — as Cyberton — put out "Alike Of Your Mind", the first of six singles on the local Fantasy label. Raw, untutored slabs of keyboard riddled with repeating drum rhythms, it developed into the emotional darkness of tracks like "No UFOs" (1985) and "Off To Battle" (1987). Released by Atkins (aka Model 500) on his own Metropolis label, "No UFOs" was picked up by Detroit's Electrifyin' Mojo, the WGPL radio DJ who, Atkins says, controlled the non-mainstream airspace between 77-87. "A lot of things happened and didn't happen because of Mojo. Disco never really took off because he didn't jump on that bandwagon. He played a spectrum that was unheard of on a commercial station. Peter Dinklage to Funkadelic. And Kraftwerk".

Kraftwerk, in the absence of whom no understanding of the entire history of 80s black dance music is possible. Saunderson, later to make his pile by taking Techno soul-pop-words and adding a singer, Paris Grey, to form the chart-topping Inner City duo, collaborated with Santonio Echols to produce some hard-to-find streamlined minimal compositions in 1987. However, it was May's experimentals on his personal label, Transmat, that moved into truly uncharted territory.

What was it about "The Dance" or "Nude Photo"? "Strings Of Life", an eight-minute 12-inch released in 1987, gave May mass exposure. In Britain, it lasted four years, a perfectly phrased anthem for burgeoning acid house and its bastard cousins, orbital raves and mega-discos. But "The Dance" and "Photo" came from another place entirely. Oddly phased, with bouncy, golloping noises centred on the off-beat, they were economical, melting structures, lateral creations that denied all notions of a musical patrimony. They remain, five years on, peerless.

SLEEPING AND SLEEPING, hardcore Techno — the purest throbbing rave-fodder — now hits uncontrolled speeds of 140 beats per minute. This time last year the mean was closer

to 130. Acid House, in its high days, stumbled along at a Zimmer-framing 120. Ten years after its appearance in underground Detroit and three years after its sudden, astonishing intrusion into UK clublife, Techno's uncontrolled headlong shift into high velocity noise is surely a sign of creative failure.

Maybe if Techno's Chicago-born Brit-bred cousin Acid House had been allowed to mature instead of being hounded into outlaw-dom by the drug-scars of 1988/89, Techno would have been able to resist this neurotic tendency to ever greater speeds. Maybe.

BUT NOW? The prognosis is not good. Acceleration without ideas has been the governing characteristic of recent European Techno. Despite a fusion with the subterranean moods of Belgian New Beat, European Techno has resolutely failed to breaking the Detroit mould, perhaps, as Faver points out, because so many who are making Techno for themselves now lack roots in disco, soul, Philly and even Chicago House. 808 State, Calabar Voltaire and Orbital have acquired themselves credibly, intelligently, the latter's "Midnight/Chose" (FFrr) a return — from pop novelty — to carefully painted soundscapes and gentle understatements. In New York, players such as Moby and Joey Beltram are introjecting personal flavours that rely less on the same, endless self-quoting samples many other acts swap.

R&S Records in Belgium have made some headway in moving away from the mindless noise intensity of T99 and their ilk. But, says Faver, "there aren't any real classics coming forward. The speed of change in style is now so fast, it's as if there's no time for anything to evolve anymore".

So maybe Hardcore Techno's concentration on flood velocity noise is just a reaction to a nightclub market flooded with cheap cocaine and speed-cut ecstasy. Maybe.

Right now, far from the shorelines of Belgium, there's a small counter-reaction going on in the depths of London's Covent Garden. Printed in blocked red ink, a flyer to a resurrection funk club reads *The President J.B. Say NO MORE HOUSE!* An unlikely riposte to LA Style's 1991 Hardcore track, "James Brown Is Dead". Let's just take it, in all its ambivalence, as a plea to move on. *

SILICON QUANA: A RECOMMENDED PLAYLIST

*Innovance Soundtrack for the Tenth Planet *Derrick May/Mayday/Rhythm Is Rhythm* (Network/Transmat)

*Trans Europe Express & The Man-Machine & Computer World *Kraftwerk* (EMI)

**Drumming Steve Reich* (Elektra/nonesuch)

In C *Terry Riley* (Edsel)

Music In 12 Parts *Philip Glass* (Vennure)

*"Planet Rock" *Afrika Bambaata & the Soul Sonic Force* (Tuttytutti Boy)

**Acid Tracks *Phuture* (Trax)

*"I'll Be Your Friend" *Robert Owens* (Perfecto)

*Structure: *Rave & Santonio* (KMS/ffrr)

"The Sound" *Rave & Santonio* (KMS)

*Retroactive/Detroit *Definitive Various Artists* (Network)

Techno! The New Dance Sound of Detroit *Various Artists* (Network)



DEEP BACKGROUND NOISE

The BBC Radiophonic Workshop: *everyone's beard of them, no one knows what they do.*
Mark Sinker investigates Auntie's best-kept secret.

SIX COMPOSERS, too shy to make claims for themselves, go to make it up. But Brian Hodgson, who's worked with the BBC Radiophonic Workshop since the early 60s, headed it since the mid-80s, is less reserved. You think about it, and you begin to wonder if this pioneering institution's secret effect on Britain's ears mightn't be huge. "It's likely," he says when asked, "that the first Electronic Music that most of today's composers heard they heard when they were listening to *Listen with Mother*. Composers will say 'I wanted to get into Electronic Music because of *Dr Who*.' We've changed the way that people listen to things . . ."

Dr Who you knew about: everyone knows they did that. But also *Life On Earth*, *The Body In Question*, dozens of *Horizons*, *Everyman*, whatever; hard and soft science, fiction; animals, planets, galaxies and minds; international prize-winning programmes for Radios 1 to 4; countless jingles, signatures and weird subliminal whispers, every week across 35 years. Turning out music for 150 programmes a year, to be half-heard at most twice, and then put away in their own vast, almost unused archive. Worldwide the only institution of its kind: product of its times (a nation happier with the past for *our* looking to the future): a labour-intensive music factory with a necessarily ephemeral output ranging from hardcore psychodrama to bridge-passages in politically sensitive documentaries, from the alien monster-noises for radio thrillers, all the way to the little songs on Schools TV that help kids remember how to spell.

IN A long-ago pulped official history of the first 25 years of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop, the fairly legendary Radiophonic Worker Delia Derbyshire tells how she created the *Dr Who* theme tune with a series of 'carefully tuned handwoops' over oscillators – tomorrow's sounds yesterday, unforgettably.

The even more legendary Daphne Oram had created the Workshop – the UK's unobtrusive answer to Stockhausen's Cologne sound-labs and Pierre Schaeffer's *concrete* studios in Paris – out of little more than hand-swoops and vision, and the backing of the BBC's Drama Department (the Music Department then not remotely interested). Built up by Oram and later Desmond Briscoe, the Workshop's Heroic Phase consisted in the wrestling of sound – for frontline drama, then-startling productions of Beckett, Ionesco, Copek and Cocteau, and of course for science fiction, always greedily for new noises – from laughably primitive equipment: "They basically had, in 1958, £2000, of which they spent £600 on a third octave filter – half of one, in fact, they couldn't afford the whole rung," says Hodgson. "£2000, one room, a packet of razor blades and a lot of nerve . . . There were 12 oscillators turned on and off by pressing keys, tuning each note separately – wobulators – and an echo device you had to turn on the day before you wanted to use it."

ORAM, DERBYSHIRE and Briscoe are long gone, retired or moved on. Hodgson left for a while, exhausted either by the world's inattention (and 11 years of *Dr Who*), but returned in the late 70s. No less than three of the present six

were BBC hands – with expertise in studio management and recording and audio technology – from those wing-and-prayer 60s days: Dick Mills (who joined the Workshop in 1958), Malcolm Clarke (1969), Roger Limb (1972). Peter Howell joined in 1975, Elizabeth Parker in 1978, Richard Attree, the most recent recruit, in 1985. Only Limb, Parker and Attree had previous academic music training.

You can tell an "engineer" from a "musician" on paper: their histories give them away. But in practice, all of them are expected to keep abreast of the technology to hand, from the dawn of tape to the computer, and all of them are expected – give or take pet skills – to take on whatever's come up. At the last possible minute, the fine cut – sometimes just a rough cut – arrives, and they sit down and watch it, with a director's possibly unhelpful brief in hand, and think about what they can do to make it more of what it already is, without being noticed. "Heightening the representation without actually telling lies," is Mills' description of one of his jobs.

Mills is in fact a genius with sound effects, tape loops and the rest, his first brush with Radiophones, *Plat On The Moon*, was about two scientists (male) going to the moon (one falls for a Moon Maiden and comes back pregnant) – but he's also worked on a Prom performance of the Spanish-English composer Roberto Gerhard's *Collages*. Clarke blames his A-levels – Physics, Art and Music – for his ending here, where among other things he's provided sound-colour for radio programmes about the work of Picasso, Klee, Dali and others.

Limb plays piano in jazz-bands almost every night: "There's a lot of ignorance," he tells me cheerfully, "even within the BBC. We still get letters from people who expect us to mend Radiophones, go round in white coats with soldering irons." Howell has put as much work into sound search-and-retrieval computer programmes and the Workshop's pioneering computer/studio design as his radio interpretations of *Dante's Inferno* and the Book of Revelations. Even as a child, Parker's only wish was to write the music for television programmes. Attree, the youngest, the pop kid, sees the Avant Garde Electronic sector they orbit – Planet Darmstadt and satellites – less as over-fiercely "modern" than simply a bit old, a bit grey: "If I'm doing a Radio 1 piece," he says, "I approach it exactly as if someone had asked me to write a symphony for the BBC Symphony Orchestra."

And Hodgson – the boffin turned administrator – has quietly transformed this backwater department of a supposedly aging and sluggish State Broadcasting monolith into a buoyant, trend-setting unit, with Music and Technology magazines beating a monthly path to its door. My poor little Sony is overwhelmed, and somehow forgets to record two of the seven interviews: Parker and Clarke lose out.

SO THERE'S this music pouring daily out of the corridors of Maids Vale, from the heart of the Official Culture Industry. Inevitably, part of it simply domesticates this or that vanguard, turning revolutionary wild-style to soap opera ends. And certainly some of it, put together in haste and routine, is lame and derivative.

But this is only part of the story. To work successfully here, you don't only have to know and understand all music, from Planchant to HipHop, you also have to recognise every little adverting trick as it turns cliché, to second-guess every misleading sonic gesture.

"It's *always* been a problem," Howell explains. "Sound association from people who aren't experienced enough using their ears to realise it might be a different sound they're listening to. You could come up with a menacing string sound that sounds like bees, but you can't use it in a context that would be effective, because of its associations. You often hear it on the air where people have been *very courageous* in use of sound, and what they actually come up with is something that's confusing. The listener doesn't know if it's a sound effect or incidental music commenting on an emotional level. And as soon as you confuse the listener for a split second, you've crashed in flames."

Is that a tortured soul, or is it just the Hoover? The liberation of dissonance turned suddenly daft: in the court of the ear's subconscious, there are no plea bargains. Unlike "real" composers, Radiophonic Workers understand that less is often best, that you can't bury mistakes under artistic "explanation", that the priority of computer's intention is a long-fled myth.

HOWELL HAS a poster up on his wall, advertising performances of a work of his, and a work by Parker, at an Electronic Music Festival in Milan last year, alongside such Euro-luminaries as Xenakis: substantial recognition, in its way. He's mildly critical of Britain's resistance to – for example – a prestige cultural venture like IRCAM, a state institution dedicated to the Experimental and Music On State Forward, but it's obvious that he and the others are really more in love with the very specific challenges Radiophonic Work throws up, the variety, the loopy pressures, the expertly-crafted anonymity, the creative stamina demanded by 30 or 40 commissions a year, the bulk of them generated and judged – though not composed – by *someone else*. "What the Workshop doesn't dozen," states the official history somewhere, "is half a dozen Mozarts."

This is the age of the synthesiser, the sampler, MIDI. The Mad Scientist days recalled by the quaint old name – when the Workshop was pioneering sound-collage, audio treatments and the first steam-powered synthesisers – are vanished forever: the rich control and possibility of Digital on one hand and the underrated sonic experience of listeners and viewers on the other mean that this technocentric age, ushered in under Hodgson's direction, leaves them more than ever cultural cogs, craftworkers of enormous resource, touching and dabbling behind the scenes. The way they more than half like it. So is the only reward a job well done in the time allowed?

"One of the great thrills," says Roger Limb simply, "is that I have heard kids singing my songs, coming out of school, having just watched *Look & Read*, or whatever."

So there's a kind of immortality too?

"Yes. Everyone's immortal for five minutes."





Since the 60s, extraterrestrial funk warrior
George Clinton *has done battle*
with the Placebo Syndrome.
Ben Watson *charts tactics and strategies.*

WHAT'S FUNK, then?

When James Brown recorded "It's Too Funky In Here" in 1979 the lyrics were a throwback, to when "funky" meant *rebellious of human odour*. It is now used for what pre-rock-and-roll people call "swing": the elusive quality of rhythmic propulsion black music has in abundance. Swing, though, was a music of elegance and pleasure: funk refers to roots, sweat and getting-down. This is a self-conscious blackness, which explains its humour, its sex and its extra-terrestrial trappings. This is blackness joking with itself.

After whites redirected the R&B bandwagon (calling it rock 'n' roll), soul reasserted blackness by tapping into the emotional extremes of black church song. However, vocal catharsis is not the only response to oppression. There is the strand of R&B which explores ghetto jive. Louis Jordan, Jack McVea ("Open The Door, Richard"), Richard Berry ("Louie Louie"), Screaming Jay Hawkins, Little Richard, Esquerita (whose name is a pun on excreta). All this extended the complex and painful humour of blackface: laughing at and against an intolerable situation. Who could pick up this mantle in an age of rock and civil rights?

MUTHA FROM ANOTHER *planet*

HIS NAME was George Clinton. Born in 1941 in Kannapolis, North Carolina, he moved to New Jersey at age 14 and was electrified by hearing Frankie Lymon And The Teenagers on the radio (also an inspiration for Anthony Braxton, of all people). He started working at a barbershop and doing street-corner singing, recording doowop singles in 1958 and 1959 for the Hull label. His group was called The Parliaments. Doo-wop was street vocal music, the 50s equivalent of rap.

Doo-wop's plainiveness sugar-coats extraordinary vocal fireworks; the ease of setting it up led to grass-roots creativity unsurpassed (in terms of record company interest) until punk. Tens of thousands of vocal groups formed, thousands made singles. Cottrell "Boogie" Mosson (bassist) remembers that he, guitarists Gary Shyder and Eddie Hazel, bassist Billy Nelson and keyboardist Bernie Worrell (all later Clinton cohorts) would "stand on the corner and sing harmonies together".

The key to Clinton's longevity as a subversive in the record industry is the way he has kept alive this street-gang mentality — though he has never been shy of extending and elucidating his politics. The bizarre and fantastic — the extraterrestrial trappings and regressive play — allow him to indulge in in-group jokes whilst freeing him from a need to "represent" the street in all its limitations (the problem that retards both Oi-punk and gangster-rap).

In the 60s the freedom to use drugs and political radicalism were all of a piece. Guitarist Gary Shyder felt acid improved his playing. "It enhanced it. It gave me a broader scope of what was going on". Like a lot of music of the drug culture (compare The Jefferson Airplane, The Grateful Dead) early Funkadelic is often more exciting in the concept than in the hearing. Whereas Hendrix — like Charlie Parker from the 40s — leaps out of the period like a firecracker, this is patchy stuff; sluggish funk topped by dissonant guitar. Clinton became a genius as a producer, but his combination of unstoppable groove and dizzying leftfield detail took a while to arrive. *Maggot Brain's* "Wars of Armageddon" (1971) hints at the relentless techno-funk that will produce Clinton's dance masterpieces of the 80s.

But the album covers! *Free Your Mind And Your Ass Will Follow* (1970) is worth acres of stoned singalongs for the gatefold: the naked female model is situated so that her head appeared on the front of the gatefold ("Free Your Mind . . .") while her buttocks appear on the back (with the legend "And Your Ass Will Follow"). Human anatomy was not used on a sleeve so creatively until Prince put his navel on the spine of *Parade*.

THE NOTES to *Cosmic Slop* (1973) evolve from ghetto protest to anti-militarism with the same ineluctable logic as Malcolm X and more recently Ice-T (one of Pop's only opponents to the Gulf War). But Clinton needed to find music as hard-hitting.

He nearly found it with Parliament. It was the same crew of musicians, but the music is clipped and disciplined, evidently "straight" dance music in comparison to Funkadelic. *Chocolate City* (Casablanca, 1975) is a classic of huffa-puffa, hippie/tribal mid-70s funk. The multi-tracked wah-wah guitars and booting horns sound great.

At the heart of funk, maintains Clinton, lies the bass. *R&B Skeletons In The Closet* (1986) was directed at "all those R&B artists who crossed over and can't get black. In order to get that crossover appeal they tell them to use less bass or don't say the word *funk*". You can hear funk bass emerge in the "party" albums Johnny Otis recorded in the late 60s - *Cuttin' Up*, *Cold Shot*, *Sugarcane* (produced for violinist Don "Sugarcane" Harris), *Live At Monterey*. His son Shuggie plays hip, a new style. It foretells the essence of funk in an R&B chrysalis. (Funkadelic guitarist DeWayne McKnight listed Shuggie Otis first in a list of inspirations that included B.B. King, Kenny Burrell and Hendrix). The other pioneer was Larry Graham's slap-bass with Sly & the Family Stone.

The two brothers that were to define the bass/guitar sound for Clinton and hence for funk - Bootsy and Phelps Collins - joined Funkadelic hot off a year's stint with James Brown. Jimmy Nolen, guitarist for Brown both before and after Phelps, was a veteran of the Johnny Otis Roadshow and played on Otis' hit "Willie And The Hand Jive". From the Godfather of R&B to the Minister Of The New New Super Heavy Funk. more bass!

Brown claimed that he sorted out Bootsy's playing: "When I met him he was playing a lot of bass - the ifs, the ands, and the buts. I got him to see the importance of the *one* in funk - the downbeat at the beginning of every bar. I got him to key in on the dynamic parts of the one instead of playing all around it. Then he could do all the other stuff in the right places - after the one." (This advice was celebrated in "Everything Is On The One" on Parliament's *Clones Of Dr. Funkenstein* in 1976.)

Apart from such lessons in the fundamentals of funk, Bootsy had a chance to work with Fred Wesley, the trombonist arranger, and later poached him and his horn section for Clinton. With the bass so cast as the definition of funk, it is small wonder Bootsy emerged as the spin-off star with a slew of Bootsy's Rubber Band albums.

Although Brown had an inventive attitude towards records (he pioneered seven-inch singles in two parts in order to release eight minute songs, recorded a pioneering live album *At The Apollo* at his own expense despite industry derision and insisted on ahead-of-its-time impact in terms of production) he restricted his musicians by his soul-man egotism - the shows were all about James.

Wesley comments on his move from the JBs to Funkadelic: "I was very happy to move from the James Brown thing, that

was really structured, to where I had a free hand to do whatever I wanted - just do your thing!"

Brown also had little idea of the possibilities of the *album*, sleeves being hastily assembled after-thoughts. George Clinton is equalled only by Frank Zappa and Prince in his fascination for every aspect of production: his albums become whole environments for their purchasers. In cartoonist Pedro Bell he found his visual Bootsy. *Uncle Jam* (1979) attempts to list every one of the "Uncle Jam Funk Army" who have written in to the fan club. On the back of *The Electric Spanking Of War Babies* (1980) a little frame shows excited buyers in a record store: "Willya look at this - dese guys are heavee!" "Okay, I'll put Stink Floyd back" (Sniff!) It's just like the old days of Frank Zappa... says the baldie. "Oh Wow - hey, we got any dope at home?" asks someone else of his mate in a Devo t-shirt. Sexual materialists all.

THE MOTHERSHIP Tour of 1977 - which featured a descending flying saucer from which Clinton emerged in outrageous gear - is legendary, as is the wonderful *One Nation Under A Groove* (1978). Wesley cannot remember any four-hour gigs, but fans remember five-hours-and-upward. Only Go Go provides a similar link back to the days of the R&B roadshows, swing and Duke Ellington.

Wesley always liked the band's dress sense - Gary Shider bounding around playing guitar dressed in a nappy - figuring that it required a Sci-Fi explanation: "I used to look at George sometimes and wonder - is he really from outer space? Are these guys really here on a visit? At that time it seemed to me that here were some people that came in from outer space and maybe the first thing they saw on earth was a baby with a diaper, so he thinks, so that's how they dress, so he put one on! It dawned on me that maybe these people had misconceptions about what clothes to put on. One guy dressed like he must have seen a fire hydrant first."

The disco boom of the late 70s, which Clinton rode as a subversive black undertow, took him with it in the early 80s when disco collapsed and the record industry suffered the worst recession ever (wise consumers built their Funkadelic collections from the sale racks). Casablanca released *Trombulation* for Parliament in 1980, then disappeared in a cloud of cocaine and lawsuits.

However, two years later Clinton managed to get a contract with Capitol, a hit - "Atomic Dog" - and, paradoxically, a string of albums that are more effective than any of the Funkadelic "classics": *Computer Games* (1982), *You Shouldn't-Nuf Bit Fish* (1983), *Some Of My Best Jokes Are Friends* (1985) and *R&B Skeletons In The Closet* (1986). Bootsy Collins also tightened up: *Ultra Wave* (1980), *The One Giveth* (1982) and *What's Bootsy Doin'* (with a cameo appearance by violinist Billy Bang) move the feet as well as making highly political jokes. "We just don't stop - we'll drive you nuts" they sang and at last the music lives up to the slogans.

THE KNOWING alienation of Kraftwerk - which dramatizes the means of production-line pop - swept dance

METAL MACHINE

musings

Brian Morton examines
the history of
composition by computer.



George Lewis in *Futurapolis*

MACHINES CAN'T laugh, but will they sing? Back in the Dream Time of any culture there is a persistent fantasy about *things* that make music – singing rocks, “sea organs” that pipe sound out of fissures, naturally interwoven branches that groan their ‘cool’ harmonics as the evening sun moves off them. Only a step from there to artefacts that make their ‘music’ – is it? – without further intervention.

The Aeolian harp is only a distant Mediterranean ancestor of ‘environmentally interactive’ works of the 60s and after, pieces like Detlef and Tauschi Kronberger’s *!*, which combined environmental change (like rain or wind) with photo-electric cells and pressure pads, to create a musical ambience that couldn’t be controlled because the parameters were always too changeable. Step back into *that* corner of the room, where the baby gurgled, and the pad triggers something different. The wind changes and the harp falls silent, or produces a new, warning hum. Terry Riley drew his inspiration for a music of equal temperament from the image of a harp left on a headland, subject to the movements of time itself.

The ‘technology’ goes back even further. There are rain drums, tuned to patter out a quiet accompaniment to the redemption of the desert. There are wind chimes. There’s even the bushman who traps bees in a gourd and drifts off to sleep to a minimalist New Age hum, confident too that their stinging anger has been contained. And isn’t all music about either containment or release? That’s certainly true of the longest-standing music machine, the bird-in-cage. If a Weather Report sleeve is to be believed, a bird doesn’t fly because it has wings; it has wings because it can fly. If so a bird in a cage isn’t a bird any more. Blind it with a hot wire to make it sing better, and it becomes a thing. Harrison Birtwistle’s *Mad King* has a rack of ruined finches to accompany his wandering.

The technology begins to assert itself and establish its own ‘event horizon’ with the arrival of mechanical clock-bells, musical boxes, fairground calliopes, perfect, controllable events that nonetheless appeal to a certain distant animism in our make-up. There was a soldier in the King’s Guard at Windsor in the 1930s who tried to prove he hadn’t nodded on

duty by claiming that Big Tom had struck thirteen. They banded him off to jankers and had him talk to the chaplain. And then the bell did it again, for no discernible mechanical reason, just for the sheer hell of hearing its own voice one more time. It’s the most dangerous fantasy of all, that things might try not to communicate, but to *express itself*. Do we dare to believe that the Tin Men really want hearts?

AS WE’VE got further down the road, both towards the generational leap that might let a machine make up its own mind about something, we’ve also got further from the animistic self-confidence that lets us share the world with things that might tap our quinnescence. It’s somehow OK to have a computer or a robot run amok, but the thought that one might sit down and write a piece of music (more dangerous even than randomizing colours or words into ‘accidental’ realism or metaphor) is utterly, unutterably unacceptable.

And so, we’ve got to the stage where we preen our tattered and outmoded humanism with the idea that it’s all down to us anyway, computers-don’t-make-errors-people-do, GIGO (‘garbage in, garbage out’), you-can-always-pull-the-plug, and so on. The machine demands an interface.

The history of music and machines has always been started too late. The first score to be written through the offices of a digital computer was Lejaren Hiller’s and Leonard M. Isaacson’s 1956 string quartet *Illiac Suite*. Serialists soon found that they could save quite a lot of “paper time”, hell, quite a lot of paper, by gerring the *idiot savant* box to rattle through the permutations and inversions in a tenth of the time, with the comforting thought that they know not what they do and you-can-always-pull-the-plug. Xenakis used computers with a refreshing pragmatism to save the labour of working out every last detail of those huge stochastic masses, and no-one considers that music bogus any more than one might dismiss a Piero della Francesca because some unknown apprentice ‘did the sky bits’ or coloured in an edge of curtain.

In the wake of Hiller’s and Isaacson’s beautifully documented experiment, there was increasing activity in digital sound synthesis. Max Mathews, with the blessing of

Bell Telephone, devised complex arrays of "compilers" that allowed all the quantifiable parameters of a "musical event", as he described it, to be determined by machine. A decade later, he was operating with the optimistically-titled GROOVE (Generation of Real-Time Operations on Voltage-controlled Equipment) which gradually gave way to digital synths, and led by an incredible progress of intellectual machination and raw cash to IRCAM and the much-vaunted polyphonic 4X.

That skimps quite a lot of the history and much of the arithmetic, because at the same time there was a countervailing resistance to the idea of technology as a primarily analytical and synthetic tool. Cage, with or without a dose of Zen, perceived that there was a music in and of the environment which had to be understood before we tasked the hubris of making our own. Cage has had remarkably little truck with computers. He has been content to explore the external and inner space we occupy for the music that it yields.

AND AT the same time as Hiller and Isaacson were making their experiments, Percy Grainger was working on his remarkably Heath Robinson "free music machine", which followed a dark-field ink trace to produce great swooping *glissandi*, not dissimilar to Xenakis's, and concentrations of completely inaccessible to a human performer. Down in Mexico, the now vastly over-rated Conlon Nanarrow was punching out 'scores' of fanatical denseness for an Ampico player piano (and it's interesting that Kurt Vonnegut Jr's first full-length science fiction tale took the player-piano as the informing metaphor for a world whose alien inhumanity still depended on a piece of domestic kitsch).

What all of these men share, to adapt the words of Xenakis's mentor and collaborator Le Corbusier, is that music has become a machine to be inhabited. That is very different from the belief that we can be possessed by music. The mutuality of music within and without is the impossible harmony. As long as we are trapped with the weasely conception of instruments as things that stand between us — sometimes neutrally, sometimes obstructively — and the music, then we cannot realise that the instruments *are* the music. This isn't nature mysticism, and has nothing to do with the 'natural' resonance of gut and wood, brass or ebony, but with a basic metaphysical misconception at the heart of technologised music-making. We've never been closer to or further from understanding it.

The problem with GROOVE is that it didn't. Computer music, all mediated music, is painfully cumbersome, even when it seems most graceful. Our obsession with silence and music's aspiration to silence is explained by our persistent belief that music is etched on silence the way a circuit is etched on a board. There is very little interactive freedom in the direction musical technology has taken us. Watching and hearing George Lewis in "conversation" with a computer, as attentive to its gestures (and as politely blind to its limitations) as it is responsive to his trombone, is one of the most

significant experiences in contemporary music, for it allows the possibility that technology allows us to be responsive to the made environment as we might be to other improvisers or to the weather or to a particular configuration of alpha waves (though we wouldn't know about that).

The dream has faded into a programme of research. But it really isn't over till the Tin Man swells his skinny ribs and sings.

Simon Trask *looks to the future.*

DURING THE 80s, technology overtuned accepted notions of how music could and should be created. Synthesizers, samplers, drum machines and sequencers together opened up new ways of translating musical ideas into musical actuality. Music-making no longer had to be a real-time performing activity requiring musicians to play a musical instrument and confine themselves to the musical role defined by that instrument.

No wonder, then, that the decade saw a polarisation of attitudes towards technology, with "real" musicians in one camp and the "non" musicians in the other. And no surprise that jazz musicians, identifying with a Grand Tradition of performance and placing the emphasis on technique and "real" musicianship, typically belonged in the former. It was left to maverick figures like George Lewis and Steve Coleman to embrace the new technology and explore the possibilities of real-time interaction between musician and computer. As far back as the mid 80s, George Lewis brought together Evan Parker, an Apple II computer and two Yamaha DX7 synths for a live human/computer improvisation session.

Now, some six years later, the trend in mainstream music software is towards the computer as "intelligent" machine performance, able to actively originate musical material rather than just passively record it. Hi-tech instrument manufacturers Roland will shortly be bringing out a drum machine which can compose rhythm patterns in a range of styles. Auto-accompaniment software on general-purpose computers like the Atari ST range is the Current Big Thing, while real-time interactive music software looks set to be the Next Big Thing. Interesting, then, that two new pieces of interactive improvising software for the Atari ST — Steinberg's Tango and Creative Sounds' Improviser — have both been written by jazz musicians. Full circle? No. Technological development follows a spiral path, always forcing us to look at the landscape from a different perspective.

THE BOUNDARIES of sampling and synthesis are becoming ever more blurred with another ongoing development, the convergence of the synthesiser and the sampler into one instrument, a trend which began with the advent of the sample-based synthesiser a few years back; Roland's S750 sampler and Kurzweil's K2000 synth represent the latest



hat

ZORN ON ZORN

"I think it's an important thing for a musician to have an overview, something that remains consistent throughout your whole life. You have one basic idea, one basic way of looking at this world, one basic way of putting music together.

I developed mine very early on – the idea of working with blocks. At first maybe the blocks were more like just blocks of sound... noisy, improvisational statements, but eventually it came back to using genre as musical notes and moving these blocks of genre around...

COBRA (het Art CD 2-6040), for me, is like a spectacle situation you know, like a sport. But ultimately that is a distraction for me because it really is meant to be heard, it's music. I don't want to take anything away from the live performance aspects... but ultimately we are involved in making music.

The same thing is true when I work in the studio, like the Seto Michihiro project (RODAN, het Art CD 6015). Even when I'm working in a NEWS FOR LULU (het Art CD 6005) and MORE NEWS FOR LULU (het Art CD 6055) situation, where I think of myself more as a textural player – which say Dolphy was – someone who works with timbre, playing a fast phrase, a slow phrase, a high phrase, a low phrase, trying to work one phrase against one another... I'm a composer who happens to play saxophone and who uses that at times to express my ideas.

So I have a wide variety of stuff going on, and these are all different elements of the way I work. Ever since I was small, I wrote classical oriented stuff, I played in a surf band, I improvised... I mean, I did a wide range of musical activities, and I think that's something very common in our generation... we're interested in many kinds of music, we're basically rootless."

(as told to Art Lange, August 1990)



hat ART: A WORK IN PROGRESS

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examples, from two different perspectives.

Sampling technology had a profound effect on music during the 80s. It also ranked high in the "real" musicians' demonology of technology, as it allowed first of all their sounds and then their performances to be appropriated by the opposing camp. Yet sampling has not led to the Holy Grail of electronic musicians – the accurate reproduction of acoustic instruments in the electronic realm – nor have performers been replaced by computers, as they once feared. In truth, sampling is only able to approximate an acoustic instrument by providing selective "snapshots" of its dynamic reality.

Don't imagine that this is technology's last word on the subject, however. The physics of sound production on acoustic instruments is much better understood now, thanks to today's sophisticated measuring instruments. At the same time, computer processing power is getting ever greater, the software writers more ingenious, and ways are being found to model in software what actually goes on inside an acoustic instrument when it's being played. In the next few years, electronic instruments will become more "real".

The miniaturisation process which is making technology portable and ever-present if not always desirable (think of Walkmans, Gameboys and mobile phones) is affecting musical technology as well. It's now perfectly possible to carry the components of a modest hi-tech recording setup around with you in a travelling bag and set them up wherever there's a power supply. Or, for musical composition on the move, there's always Yamaha's QY10 "walkstation", an amazingly compact all-in-one sequencer, drum machine and multitimbral sound module, complete with built-in rubber-pad keyboard, which can be run off batteries and listened to on a set of Walkman headphones. It's been a massive success for Yamaha, and looks like being the first of a new generation of portable composition tools which will allow musicians to record their ideas wherever inspiration strikes.

ONE TECHNOLOGICAL development which is currently All Systems Go in the mainstream market is computer-based digital audio recording, which brings a sequencer-like flexibility to the manipulation of audio events. Limited to the elite "professional" class during the last decade, this form of recording is now becoming financially accessible to more and more musicians. Significantly, the new recording systems are integrating audio recording with sequencing, and in the process providing a setting for acoustic and electronic instruments, and live and sequenced playing, to come together. Or maybe computer-based digital audio recording, which is as much an active composition tool as it is a passive recording tool, will become another item in that demonology of technology – the sampling devil writ large.

With the video world currently undergoing its own "sampling revolution", and the integration of audio and video media continuing apace, perhaps the technology-centred musician will become a "muss/video artist", manipulating

images and sounds with equal ease and producing a new form of integrated audio-visual art. Some musicians are already investigating the possibilities.

But the transformative power of technology isn't only limited to the producers of art. The notion of the passive consumer is slowly being eroded by a mixture of cultural and technological influences – remix philosophy transferring from producer to consumer. Future consumer technology will give us greater control over the form and content of the music we listen to.

One thing's for sure: technological developments in the 90s will challenge the status quo as they did in the 80s – if anything, probably more profoundly. . . . *

Simon Trank is Assistant editor of Music Technology magazine.

CLINTON from page 39

music in the late 80s. Prince, though, proved to be a fan of Clinton's insistence on the live show: he sorted out his legal problems, jammed with him at his Minneapolis nightclub and released *Cinderella Theory* in 1989 on Paisley Park. Recycling old beats and samples, rap has always packed an historical awareness (an innovation that parallels rap's *newness*, bop neo-conservatism). "Tweakin'" featured a work-out with Chuck D and Flavor Flav of Public Enemy. A new album – *Swell My Fingers* – is in the pipeline, as is a film from the Hudlin Brothers (of *House Party* fame).

It is not really possible to imagine George Clinton perpetrating the dilutions and sell-outs he criticizes in those around him – what is he going to turn himself into, a matinee idol? He is either firing on all cylinders or lost, deflated, suppressed by an increasingly streamlined record business. Like the undersung Swamp Dogg, George Clinton proves that a stress on blackness need not endlessly deploy the myth of authenticity and roots, but can also invent and fantasize, project the myth backwards into the nursery, forward into space.

The hocus-pocus of pyramidal mysticism is a sad cul-de-sac for black consciousness, and *Tombikpalaton's* crazy meeting of hieroglyphics and plastic elephant trunks allies imagination with its true ally: absurdity, not mysticism. (Sun Ra knows this – does Anthony Braxton?)

"Black dada nihilism", recited Amiri Baraka in 1964, never quite getting the right relation of word to music to take the poetry out of the Greenwich Village coffee house. Thanks to his survival in the record industry, George Clinton's black dada infantilism operates on a world stage, educating as it mocks, questioning as it indulges. Not for nothing does the sleeve note of 1974's *Standing On The Verge Of Getting It On* run:

"On the Eighth Day, the Cosmic Serpenter of MOTHER-NATURE was spawned to envelope this Third Planet in FUNKACIDAL VIBRATIONS. And she birthed Apostles Ra, Hendrix, Stone & CLINTON".

I'll funk to that. *

INVISIBLE

* CABARET VOLTAIRE *

JUKE BOX

THROBBING GRISTLE

"20 Jazz Funk Greats" from *Greatest Hits* (Mute/Grey Area).

I do know what it is but I can't place it. hold on, it's Throbbing Gristle. I thought it was, but I was waiting for another voice to come in, to make sure it didn't turn out to be a Prince song, just because of those 808 Roland rhythms. TG used them early on and they're still used today. I wouldn't be surprised if Prince had heard of TG, he's weird and diverse enough in his taste, isn't he? But the delays on the trumpets give it away as Throbbing Gristle. Like us, they were the ones to put into popular music diverse sound sources, found sources, TV things, stuff like that. Even on the image side they've been highly influential right up to the present. Front 242's corporate terror image would be nowhere without Throbbing Gristle. I like them in the way that half the time they think they're being incredibly funky and they're being incredibly weird at the same time, but they don't see the weird side as much as other people do. I'd give that four out of five.

MAN-MACHINE featuring ZEN

"Denkimi-Shakuhachi" (Outer Rhythm/Rhythm King 12").

This could be anything. I know the bassline, but I can't think where from. It sounds very A Guy Called Gerald with the Shakuhachi flute. Also Chicago Fingers Inc.

It's *Man Machine*.

So I got the Japanese flute right, but I don't know the track. It sounds a couple of years old which is why it sounds quite housey. It's good, quite an ambient sort of feel to it, s'alright. I like it, it's quite cool. The danger is, though, if you subtract the rhythm all you're left with is a slick new age music. It's quite smooth, quite mellow, and I appreciate the sounderack element. Nowadays, my interest in terms of rhythm has gone away from pure drum machine to sampled sounds, things like that. This is pure electronics. People who are musicians tend to listen to things in a totally different way. I listen to pick things out. I love flute sounds as an alternative to a string sound to carry a melody. This'll be a sampled shakuhachi, probably from the library Three.

Each month we test a musician with a series of records which they're asked to comment on and mark out of five – with no prior knowledge of what it is they're hearing.

CABARET VOLTAIRE have been a permanent presence at the forefront of popular music experimentation since Eno and Roxy Music first inspired non-musicians Stephen "Mal" Mallinder, Richard H. Kirk and early absconder Christopher Watson to collage noises with tape recorders and crude synthesizers. Alongside Throbbing Gristle, they applied William Burroughs' cut-up theories in an escalating media guerrilla campaign against the centre's mediocrity. In the process they introduced sampler methods – albeit in the form of tape loops – that have since become common practice in the age of digital computer technology. They might be pre-just about every avantist trend – Industrial, House, Techno etc – but they have also been active and enthusiastic participants in most of them, their circuits periodically cleared out, refreshed or regenerated by developments in Chicago and Detroit. The extent of their influence can be measured by the 14 CD reissue programme of their independent years by the Grey Area of Mute and the forthcoming compilation of remixes of their Virgin period. They are presently working on a follow-up to last year's acclaimed *Body And Soul, Percussion Force and Colours* discs.

In the absence of Richard H. Kirk, on holiday in Egypt, Mal undertook alone a scuff Invisible Jukebox test of musics that inspired them, might have been inspired by them or had some distant affinity with them through various stages of their career.

Stephen Mallinder was tested by **Biba Kopf**

PIERRE SCHAEFFER

"Primitive 1948: Study For Whirligigs" from *Panorama Of Musique Concrete* (London/Ducretet-Thomson).

I don't know it.

It's *Pierre Schaeffer*.

You sort of respect the mathematical approach of musique concrete, but a primitive approach can achieve the same ends as well. Its place in music is very valid, obviously. In populist terms, it's difficult to say how much influence it does have. But

from a personal point of view I've always been fascinated by where it comes from, the basis for it, what leads to that. It's primitive versus the academic in some ways. We come from the primitive side, we take the short-cut! Achieve something similar without the soulsearching! It's soundtrack to me. As a sound source, I'd give it four. When it's broken down to its bare essentials, two bars would make a good building block for something else. As a piece in its own right I'd give it two as a soundtrack to the washing up

ENO

"Sombre Reptiles" from *Another Green World* (EG).

Eno! From *Another Green World* — "Sombre Reptiles"? A brilliant piece of music. It's one of my favourites. Eno is one of the main reasons we did music. We were into Roxy Music. Eno summed it all up, playing a VC55 and a tape recorder. The first things we wanted to get hold of were some similar synthesizers and numerous tape recorders and things to bang like Pierre was banging just before! He was the first person to say he was a non-musician to be working in a rock context. As far as we were concerned that was it. Roxy did it with rock and we tried to do it with the funk thing. Rich and Chris Watson went to an Eno lecture at Bradford Art College. They couldn't get to speak to him, so Chris gave him a reel-to-reel tape in the genre folder! We never heard anything from him, but we don't hold a grudge. Five.

MICHEL WAISVISZ

"A Cheval" from *Crackle* (FMP).

It sounds like the Penguin Cafe Orchestra on acid. The Residents? No, I don't know it. Michel Waisvisz.

I don't know him. Again as sound producer, there's a really nice little bass but which I'd love to sample and mess around with. I'd give it three or four. Actually as a listening piece, it's quite good. Three. I like the way it's just about to drop to bits, and then pulls itself together again. I assume he's playing a shortwave radio or is it a violin? I think it would drive me mad after a while. Two.

TECHNO-ANIMAL

"White Dog" from *Techno-Animal* (Parthological).

I'm trying to put it into some kinda context, but I don't know what. My initial reaction is negative. It sounds very Material/Bill Laswell, the '80s heavy drum type funk, but it doesn't do much for me.

It's by members of God and Godfish.

I know the names, but I'm not familiar with their music. I can appreciate it on one level, but it should go further. There should be more elements to it. It's basically rhythm and samples. Which is great. I like the power of it, which is really good, but it's a

bit one-dimensional. I can see why they do it. That's just my personal take on it. It sounds very much like Swans without the other things laid on top. Two.

NAPALM DEATH

"Retreat To Nowhere" from *From Enslavement To Obliteration* (Earache).

Sounds like Neuhaute? No. No idea. [Napalm Death] I don't know anything about Napalm Death. Neuhaute was the closest thing I could get to it. It doesn't mean anything to me, to be quite honest, I don't have any particular feelings about it. I can understand the energy, the angst, the fear and all that.

Anything to be said for speed and brevity?

Not speed, huh, I can't take it anymore! In terms of compounding all that into 30 seconds, I dunno, I prefer The Ramones, they got a tune and two choruses into one and a half minutes. No, I'm being too flippant. I suppose there's something. But you're talking to someone who was happy about the 12" because it extended the room in which you could manoeuvre, so it would be a bit ironic if I said I really loved the idea of something that comes across as a musical burp. For me, the longer the better. We're the Grateful Dead of today. One.

PHUTURE

"Acid Tracks" (Trix 12").

Sounds like one of our old rhythms? It's got all the nice 909 drum machine woodblock sounds on it.

Are drum machines and their operators as immediately identifiable as drummers?

For sure. This is great. It really sounds like old Acid. I know what everything is made of, but I'm not sure who it's by. I suppose that is the nature of a lot of the music coming out today. Aside from the labels, producers and engineers, names are almost irrelevant. 'Artur' is a very ambiguous term now. It doesn't bother us at all that it is, though granted when we were signed to Virgin and EMI they pushed our images up. Hold on, this is the original "Acid Tracks" by Phuture. It's got something about the previous track with rhythm and samples, because it's more hypnotic. If it works do it! Keep it going for five minutes! The way Eno was important to us, this kind of music recharged our batteries. As a historical piece, five.

CAN

"Chain Reaction" from *Soon Over Babalonia* (Spoon/Mute/Grey Area).

Byrne and Eno? Oh sorry, it's just dawned on me. Can! I should have been shot if I didn't get that one. Like Eno, they're another reason why we're here. We saw them about three times. It's from *Soon Over Babalonia*. Can were totally, unconsciously funky without thinking about it. Richard and I have both separately played Can to DJs from a garage, soul and jazz-funk backgrounds who knew nothing about them and it really freaked them out. Now they're really open to it. A lot of black American music has gone real diverse. The dance thing says, the weirder the better. Can almost fits in with it, which isn't to say they're played in the clubs, but as an inspiration they're unsurpassable. If you ask a lot of musicians, the slightly older ones like 808 State, they must have been influenced by them, I'm sure. Improvisation has got that pseudo-intellectual tag to it, but the point with Can is 90 per cent of the time the end result was incredibly attractive. With the earlier *Music Concrete* thing, the concept might have been strong but the end result wasn't so great to listen to. Unlike Can, and that's the litmus test, I suppose. Five.

INFINITI

"Techno Por Favor" from *Techno 2: The Next Generation* (Ten).

I can't remember if I know this. No, I don't. I got the first generation, but never got the second one! Techno's become the all-encompassing term, taking in everything including old Belgian new beat. Now it means just about anything, just like House did. To me it means Detroit, Derrick May, Juan Atkins, Kevin Saunderson. They were the pioneers, and then the English, represented by Warp and Network labels. If this wants to call itself Techno, I suppose it can be. This is not the best example of what I would call Techno. Though we are not purely electronic, we're linked to Techno in terms of technology. Then, so is *Terminator 2*. Richard's *Sweet Exorcist* is closer. What's nice about Techno is its use of analog synthesiser, which tried to assimilate other instrumental sounds, but had a totally unique quality in trying to do it, whereas new digital sampler technology reproduces them straight. It's quite nice that Techno's heralded a major resurgence of analog. But this isn't a very interesting example of anything. One.



Post-Colonial, Fourth World Hybrid, Techno-Pagan, Global Futurist Top 20

1. **Bacchanale (1963)** Richard Maxfield (From "Richard Maxfield: Electronic Music" Advance Recordings)
2. **Telemusik (1966)** Karlheinz Stockhausen
3. **Moon Dance** Sun Ra (from *Cosmic Tones For Mental Therapy*)
4. **Black Satin** Miles Davis (from *On The Corner*)
5. **Rain Dance** Herbie Hancock (from *Sextant*)
6. **The Sound** Rosé & Santonio (KMS 12")
7. **Voiceprint (808 State remix one)** Jon Hassell (Land 12")
8. **Koro Koro No Smoke** (Warriors Dance 12")
9. **Eastern Breeze** Critical Rhythm (NuGroove 12")
10. **Lukuji Spirits Edit** MC 900 Ft Jesus with DJ Zero (Nettwerk 12")
11. **Riot In Lagos** Ryuichi Sakamoto (from *B-2 Unit*)
12. **Mad Jack Sweet Exorcist** (from *Warp C.C.E.P.*)
13. **Juju Space Jazz** Brian Eno (from forthcoming album)
14. **Djina Mouso** Nahawa Daambia (from *Didadi*)
15. **Doo Root Deadline** (from *Down By Law*)
16. **Primitive African Head Charge** (from *Great Vintage* vol. 1)
17. **Techno Dream** Ray Lewis (from *Gaia*)
18. **Mamae Cade Balcia** Nana Vasconcelos (from *Bath Dance*)
19. **Rydims #2 Rydims** (NuGroove 12")
20. **State Ritual** 808 State (from "Quadrastate" EP)

PC4WHTPGF20 rounded up by David Toop





the charts

Every month a collation of the curious and the comely. We welcome your own playlists.

George Sinnema New Year's Day Hair Of The Dog Ten

1. **Lady Macbeth Of Mtsensk** Dmitri Shostakovich
2. **Street Priest** Ronald Shannon Jackson & The Decoding Society (Moers)
3. **September Side C** Painkiller (Earrache)
4. **Portent** Centipede (RCA)
5. **Apocalypse Now s/t** Coppola (Elektra)
6. **Rejoicing** John Zorn (Elektra Musician)
7. **Jesus Saves** Slayer (Def Jam)
8. **Home Grown** Ornette Coleman (Artists House)
9. **Freedom** Art Bears (Recommended)
10. **Aspirin and alcohol**

Galped down by reader George Sinnema of Leuswarden in Holland.

Seven Kids Who Regret Their Parents' Devotion To Jazz

1. **Thelonious Smith**
2. **Zoot Smith**
3. **Fats Smith**
4. **Dizzy Smith**
5. **Bix Smith**
6. **Cannonball Smith**
7. **Art Ensemble Of Smith**

Compiled by reader Brian A. Smith, Mautrais, Angus.

The Down Home Guide To The Blues

BY FRANK SCOTT

Acappella Books, paperback, 250 pp., £9.99

GIVEN THE bewildering array of blues recordings currently available on LP, CD and cassette, the publishing of a book which guides the collector through 3,000 such releases, pinpointing best buys and musts to avoid, must be a welcome event. This volume is not all that it seems at first sight, for the "Down Home" in the title refers not to that style of blues but to a mail-order record dealership in the U.S.A. of which British-born author Scott is a director. The book is basically a descriptive catalogue of all the records which they have in stock, though this fact does not necessarily inhibit its impartiality; after all, Down Home presumably want to sell all their stock.

Recordings are listed and briefly discussed in alphabetical order, with sections at the end for compilations listed by theme (Pre-War Blues, Texas, etc.). Despite considerable over-use of the epithet "fine" in the capsule reviews, the book does not pull its punches ("... he is a fine singer and piano player but you wouldn't know it from this album" is a typical pithy comment). Scott had several helpers when compiling this book, and this can lead to differences of opinion. "[Peppermint] Harris' voice was never that strong..."; "Plummy-voiced Texas blues shouters Harris". A balanced opinion indeed!

Throughout the text, some 100 albums are spotlighted as "Essential Selections" to help the tyro to assemble a balanced collection; these are mostly "Best Of's" and definitive sets like Flyright's *Louisiana Swamp Blues* CD, though anyone who picks out the '73 Hamburg live album over and above Professor Longhair's Atlantic or Specialty sessions must have a whole lotta Hamburg live albums sitting on the shelf.

Despite a few howlers (the authors mix up their Luther Johnsons, an easy error, and achieve the harder task of making father James and son Lucky Peterson into one artist), this is an authoritative and readable guide to the best music ever recorded!

MIKE ATHERTON

Feminine Endings: Music, Gender And Sexuality

BY SUSAN McLARY

University of Minnesota Press, £9.95 p/b

SOMETIMES a book arrives which so effectively brings together strands of thinking already (separately) in the air – seemingly forever – that you can't really understand why it took so long to get it written. Suddenly Conspiracy Theories start to make sense (how else to suppress an idea whose time has so long been now?); everything touches everything, you feel the book contains multitudes, including hundreds of things it doesn't actually get round to discussing.

For starters, let's just recall the apparently opposing claims of two middle-aged establishment Frenchmen, Jacques Attali, whose *Bruits* outlined a theory of music as social prophecy (where, read correctly, order and disorder in harmony and harmonic theory prefigured the same in the state), and Pierre Boulez, who once disgustedly pointed out that music is always at least half a century behind the other developed modern arts.

McLary contributed a useful postlude to the UK translation of *Bruits* (published as *Noise*), discussing it in the light of Punk Rock, which it just predated. Boulez doesn't even get into the index of *Feminine Endings*; although the introduction dryly expands on one of his points (as regards the political specifics of feminism): "Norton's specially reprinted collections from *The New Grove Dictionary Of Music*... are entitled 'Masters Of Italian Opera', 'Masters Of The Second Viennese School', and so forth, perhaps taking their cue from the successful 'Masters Of The Universe' series on Saturday morning television. If musicology has lagged behind in admitting feminist criticism to its legitimate areas of enquiry, it is way ahead of the game in its efforts to expunge all evidence that feminism ever existed."

This is a collection of essays, then, which tells us what happens when straight-ahead musicology and post-punk feminism come explosively into contact. Topics covered range from Monteverdi's operas to music-narrative strategies in the chart-hits of Madonna ("best understood as head of a corporation", rather than a "composer" in the

old-fashioned sense). Also included: "Sexual Politics In Classical Music" (a particularly brilliant piece on the implications of Absolute Music as a concept and an ideal, looking at Buzet's *Gornes* and the commentaries of, among others, Adorno's pupil Carl Dahlhaus), and "Excess And Frame: The Musical Representation Of Madwomen", where the harmonic and dramatic innovations of Donizetti, Strauss, Schoenberg and Diamanda Galas are tied in to surface and sub-surface thinking about gender and propriety, and in particular the kinds of desire men allow themselves to demonstrate when being taken seriously is at issue.

Wherever academic analysis – such as Schenker's – represses exploration of emotion in favour of a discourse limited to "logical musical progression", very strange and maybe sinister stuff is going on, McLary is suggesting similarly, wherever a world is divided a priori into supposedly God-given polarities (active/passive, major/minor, male/female, radical/reactionary, good/bad...).

All of which is just as much relevant in musics from Jazz to wherever (she doesn't herself directly touch on "black" musics) – in fact in any music that isn't already presently some slippery and despised zone of (as my colleague Ms Glass would put it, more in optimism than conviction) "mutation", of sexual (or racial) crossdressing (like metal, or Techno). That McLary's deconstruction acts with more bite in "serious" areas of music is hardly in doubt (her Madonna-piece will read like fairly old news to those familiar with much Pop Cultural sociology). After all, "seriousness" – in pair with "triviality" – forms one of these polarities. Just one of the many breakthroughs of this book is that McLary has found a framework which allows her to examine (in principle) *all music* without time and again reproducing the countless dreary old interdisciplinary pre-judgments that now litter the field (or fields...).

There's no point pretending all the evidence is in, on the other hand, there's no denying her thesis is well enough argued for anyone genuinely engaging with it to recognise that our understanding of music as a whole is gradually (or speedily) going to be changed forever. By articulating Attalian facts in Boulezian language, she's unleashing on music ideas of enormous force and import-

ance which have to date been kept at quarantine-distances.

This book arrives at a time when multi-cultural critical discourse is being savaged, by the new right and the old left, right across America, for being – somehow simultaneously – Stalinist (the PC debate) and frivolous (the PoMo debate). Maybe some of it is: but – compared to the extremely disappointing recent collection *Music & The Politics Of Culture* (ed. Christopher Norris), and Edward Said's better (but still hardly to the point) *Musical Elaborations* – this is groundbreaking stuff. The first decent argument in favour of learning to read music since Ornette (or Elvis) put tomorrow in question.

MARK SINKER

The New Revised Stan Getz Discography

BY ARNE ASTRUP

Bradtrap Discographical Publishing Co.
£19.95

AN OPPORTUNE publication following Getz's death last June, these 264 8" X 11½" pages make up the third edition of Astrup's monumental achievement. Anyone likely to read this notice will be aware of the vast amount of work that goes into making a discography, and one of this size can only be the result of an enduring devotion. Himself a tenor saxophonist, Astrup is a Dane, his concern with the subject of this discography goes back to 1946, and there is obvious aptness to Getz's last known recordings, of March 1991, being done in Copenhagen, for Danish Radio.

As one might hope, there are many corrections of factual errors in these pages, but the main event separating this third edition from its predecessor is the arrival of the CD, this greatly adding to the pile-up of catalogue numbers, particularly in the case of the more widely distributed titles. At the other extreme is still-unissued material which looks intriguing, for example a 1964 quartet session done in London with Pat Smythe at the piano.

Browsing through these densely crowded pages, one can only wonder at the scope of Getz's recorded output – how long would it



take to listen to all the music detailed here? – yet this represents only a fraction of his playing life. Of course, the greatest wonder is the consistent musical quality of that part of it that one has been able to hear. Clearly this is a book without which Getzians cannot hope to survive.

MAX HARRISON

(A digit was omitted from the contact address for Joe Carducci's *Rock & The Pop Narcotic* last month – the correct address reads: PO Box 476750, Chicago, Ill. 60647)

In this month's
SOUNDCHECK:



The crew were sure they had booked the studio, but Bain refused to budge.

David Redfern

Reviews reviews reviews: from Anthony Braxton to The Cunning Little Vixen, from Attila Zoller to God.

wire winners: big band

COUNT BASIE

*

One More Time

Roadside CDP 7973712 CD

*

Fun Time

Pablo PACD-2310-945-2 CD

SOMEHOW, ONE becomes less critical of music as it slips into the past. The Basie Band on the Pablo release, for example, I heard virtually every night for ten days at the Nice Festival of '75 (it must have been about a week before this concert was taped). And, as I recall, our crowd was rather snuffy about it. "It's a funny old scene", I remember one seasoned fan observing, "when Basie only has two decent soloists, and they're both trombonists". Then, we considered Butch Miles a painfully flashy drummer (Basie had a taste for showy percussionists, whom he thought, quite rightly, went down well with audiences). And the singer Bill Caffey struck us as frankly dreadful.

Well, on this recorded evidence, we were right. But none of it seems to matter as much 16 years later. The trombonists (Al Grey and Curtis Fuller) are still the best soloists, and "Good Times Blues", with a long solo from Basie himself – a superb player we tended to take for granted – and a passionate plunger-muted outburst from Grey, remains the highlight of the set. With hindsight, that sounds like a classic bit of Basie. But Miles isn't that intrusive. Even Jimmy Forrest's grandstanding feature on "Body And Soul" (repeated note for note at each performance) has become quite nice. Caffey one can just flick past on CD.

Of course, we were comparing the Basie Band of '75 with one like the late 50s outfit on *One More Time*, stuffed with tremendous musicians. Far from only having two soloists (34 if you count Basie himself and Forrest), this '58 band had scarcely any players who weren't outstanding. Among the reeds alone, for example, there were no fewer than three very fine tenor saxophonists (Billy Mitchell, Frank Foster and Frank West). And the ensemble is a marvel of satiny strength. This is excellent post-war Basie (although even better is the album of Neal Hefti arrangements with which this Quincy Jones set used

to be packaged). It really is considerably better than the 70s article.

The 50s bands too were derided in their day for not being as good as the 30s and 40s editions – which on the whole they weren't. But then in the 30s Basie had in Lester Young the most inspired jazz improviser who ever drew breath (*Oh yeah?* – Ed). These standards of comparison are tough. One objection I used to have to Basie was that he was inclined to play the same programme, in the same order, every time you saw him. I put this to the veteran trumpeter Doc Cheatham (who was around some time before Basie ever had a band, and is still playing well today). Doc considered the point, then pronounced, "Always a good sound, though."

Now, it's easy to hear how right he was. Not just from night to night, but also from year to year, Basie produced consistently good music. In retrospect, all his bands have something to be said for them. And – excluding the occasional utter dog – all his albums are worth hearing.

MARTIN GAYFORD

wire winner: political pianism

CORNELIUS CARDEW

*

Piano Music

RAE RB011 CD

KILLED by a hit-and-run driver in 1981, Cornelius Cardew continues to be a focus for dissident voices within classical music. He premiered Pierre Boulez in England (1956) and worked with Karlheinz Stockhausen (1958–60). In 1966 he founded the non-musicians' Scratch Orchestra and, converting to Maoism, denounced Cage and Stockhausen (and his own earlier compositions) for "serving imperialism". The CD arrives with a commendation from noted leftist Robert Wyatt on the back.

At the Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival 1980 revived works from Cardew's *avant garde* period (works postmodern orthodoxy is keen to forget). The pieces on this CD were written as attempts at populism following his political awakening. They are gentle and folksy, reminiscent of Michael Finnissy's piano writing before the tensions erupt. Here, where things live up, it is in a

fairly predictable and "classical" manner.

It's his politics that make the music interesting – because Cardew's Maoism deserves proper critique (the sleeve note points out that he didn't support Communist regimes in eastern Europe – a disingenuous remark considering the all-too-Maoist butchery in Tiananmen Square at the same date). Mao rode to power using a peasant army after the zigzags of the (Stalinist) Communist Party lost the revolution for the working class. He suppressed workers' democracy and instituted state capitalism.

Serving up this tepid tea-room fare as "communicative" betrays Cardew's patronising and pessimistic view of the potential of the masses. Genuine *avant garde* art proposes a utopian critique of capitalism's treatment of subjectivity. Cardew's *Piano Music* criticizes capitalism about as much as Mao



BEN WATSON

opposed the economic exploitation of the Chinese working class – ie, not at all.

Still, for raising questions like these, the music is more important than the smugly entrenched elitism that passes for "classical" music most of the time. So – a winner.

wire winner: upfront NY jazz

JACK DEJOHNETTE'S SPECIAL EDITION

*

Earth Walk

CDP 796092 CD

FITTINGLY – CONSIDERING the band members' other playing records – this opens with

a modern New York up-frontness, a piano spurt, defiant electric bass. But it has melodies for those who find recent Steve Coleman too definite or didactic a statement. A nice horn section in the introduction mellows as it continues into the following "Blue" intro.

When I first saw Special Edition (in the tent at Bracknell jazz festival) their efficiency and rich production marked them out – not necessarily for the better, as the richness of production seemed almost too controlled, too much of a priority. But the production here is complementary to the strong, defined but not overcontrolled playing. Throughout, Jack DeJohnette gives rounded, musical drumming without flourish, without being overblown or domineering. As ever, his strength in his work and bass in the group somehow allows his playing to be both

Of the remaining you could skip "On Golden Beams" and possibly the complex and occasionally uncertain "Monk's Plum" which is finally held together – perhaps aptly – by Michael Cain's piano. Not "One On One", though, which features all the band to good effect – a talkative acoustic bass solo from Lonnie Plaxico, while Osby and Gary Thomas chat back and forth to a quality that's almost expected after their lengthy collaboration in various situations, and Cain's piano is an expressive solo of substance matched by the leader.

Even losing the couple of tracks I mentioned there's well over 50 minutes of music that's worth your purchase.

ANDREW POTHECARY

wire winner: spoken word mafia

MARISELA NORTE

*
Norte/WORD
New Alliance NAR CD 052 CD

WANDA COLEMAN

*
Berber On Hollywood Boulevard
New Alliance NAR CD 059 CD

JAZZ POTRY? Yeah, but who'd buy that? Get real this isn't Marsalis on the cover of *Newtunk*, this is all-too-real life.

Norte speaks her lines in Spanish, the true forgotten language of underclass America, before she translates them (or doesn't). she wrote most of *Norte/WORD*, she says, on the #18 bus from East to Downtown LA, about life, love and loneliness between worlds, between languages. Funny, sexy, flat-brutal, everyday, the absolute opposite of "latina art", of – her words – "the Virgin of Guadalupe covered with cactus thorns", and still deliciously UnWASP. Maybe best poem: "Se Habla Ingles" – crossborder smalltalk at a Mexican pre-marriage party and what matters in a girl's life on *el otro lado* (the other side).

Coleman, less youthfully playful, far more political, singsongs her short street stories way off "natural" rhythm (the sleeve note compares her to Sonny Rollins, but Beaton might often be closer, sometimes her

spokenword shapes hang in chilled air like Webert); her focus is struggle for underclass survival in South-Central LA, in the face of poverty, AIDS, racist and economic terrorism. In the new *RE/Search* (No. 13: "Angry Women", inc. Diamanda Galas, Annie Sprinkle, Avital Ronell), she tells how she nearly joined the American terrorist group Weather Underground in the 60s, except that she became a poet instead, and how if she hadn't had kids to raise she'd have moved to New York and been big. Also funny, but far darker: "She was the perfect woman, until he discovered she had a mania for flesh..."

New Alliance – a label founded by hardcore band The Minutemen, lately taken on by SST – is now as close as any label's going to get to a happening US 60s/90s multicultural rainbow coalition of political resistance (resistance to sentimental mythology, resistance to despair, resistance to greed, corruption, blah blah blah). Most everything about it – racial-mixed dissident seriousness, reach of critical intelligence, hardcore roots – mean it isn't possibly going to get mainstream attention stateside or here, or a helping hand out of its unjust art-ghetto (unless the divine Ms Caccione's serious about her avant garde label-project). Some voices some people will do anything not to hear. Not knowing about New Alliance (or SST), Wanda Coleman, Marisela Norte (or any of *RE/Search's* "Angry Women") means not knowing about genuine refusnik undercurrents abroad in a clearly collapsing society. Forget Eastern Europe, because the West Coast is the next too-long neglected social space to go critical – and this time, the secret underground has dibs on all the sex, the intelligence, the wit, etc.

HOPEY GLASS

soundcheck

RABIH ABOU-KHALIL
Al-Jadida
Eap 0090 2 CD

MOHAMMAD REZA
SHADJARIAN
Mistigie Clastique Persiane
OCORA C 519097 CD

ABDEL GADIR SALIM ALL-
STARS
The Merdoun Kings Play Songs Of Love



central and circumnavigatory

A balladist Greg Osby on alto is central to the Shorter tribute "Where Or Wayne", one of the strongest tracks, well explored (especially by Greg), but defined by a simple riff. "Priestesses Of The Mist" has the ethereal quality you might expect of the title track. "Earth Walk" (a sleeve explanation notes that "we listen and learn from the crawlers, four-legged, swimmers and flyers" as we journey through life). All the same "Earth Walk" is no BBC wildlife soundtrack or walk with soft and cuddly animals, but a gurdy stride with respect to the animals' own strength and equal place. It follows Native American philosophy, including net electric bass/electric percussion/drum combinations around piano bursts and communicative sax – not forgetting Joan Heney's animal noises interrupting and screaming throughout.



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SHEFFIELD Library Theatre, Tudor Square 0742 769922
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VOICES

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North Indian
classical ragas

John Cape
Roger Marsh
Henri Pousseur
Giacinto Scelsi



HAMZA EL DIN

Eclipse

RYKODISC RCD 10103 CD

SINCE THE 1960s jazz musicians have looked towards Arabic music for inspiration (think of Don Cherry, Ornette Coleman, Pharoah Sanders, even the much-maligned Herbie Mann). An Arabic musician returning the compliment by working out how jazz can be utilised from the perspective of the Arabic musical tradition is much rarer. Oud player Rabih Abou-Khalil, raised in Lebanon, now resident in Munich, develops a subtle and intelligent international synthesis which, unlike most, is still heavily rooted in his own native musical perspective. *Al-Ja'ida* repre-

genus is to some degree a self-effacing one, rarely resorting to extravagant displays of virtuosity just to impress. The accompanying instruments – the barbat, the tar (lute), the santur (zither), ney (flute), the bowed kamantche and daf frame drum – share Shadjarian's dynamic precision, some of the ensemble passages are so closely woven that they almost seem to be formed of the breath from a single torso. Voice and instrument come together in rhythmically free improvised exchanges comparable in some ways with the julebands in Hindustani music. All the material is based on poignant songs of loving and losing, yet those elements of extroversion and overt emotionalism that are present are always balanced with sobriety, dignity and restraint, whose depth gets more apparent with each listening.

Abdel Gadir Salim and Hamza El Din are both Sudanese; oud players and singers blending traditional regional melodies with Arabic classical music. Salim is quite well known to Western audiences, his superb solo record *Songs From Kordofan* being a classic of the genre. Two songs from that album, "Umrina Bana" and "Maqtoul Hawakiya Kordofan" get a second airing here, both to my mind in greatly inferior versions. Like 1989's *Serenade Of The Night* *Songs Of Love* features Salim with an expanded lineup, this time electric guitars and bass being added to the violin, sax, keyboards and percussion. His seductive voice is as elegant and sensuous as usual but the attempt to funk things up a bit sounds vulgar to me and the overall sound is too smoothly boring. As a vocalist Hamza El Din lacks some of Salim's magic but he is a more exciting and innovative oud player, his rhythms communicating (to me) freedom and openness combined with utter conviction and calm. His use of harmonics and quite unexpected little tones is particularly intriguing, reminding me (very) slightly of Derek Bailey. This is an old 1978 recording from Grateful Dead drummer Mickey Hart's *The World Series* but remastered and available in this country for the first time. I wonder what he's up to now?

RICHARD SCOTT

ARILD ANDERSEN

Saga

ECM ECM 1435 CD

SAGA (WHICH means A Saga) is an extended composition commissioned from Arild Andersen for a Norwegian Jazz Festival in

1990. Like Jan Garbarek's 1989 album *Roseufule* with singer Agnes Buen Gamas, it draws directly on the Norwegian folk material which is implicit in much of their jazz work.

Kirsten Besten Berg is the singer in Andersen's three-part composition, which breaks down into 16 constituent sections. The clarity and purity of her voice is ideal for the folk material which he incorporates, and complements the rather austere instrumental timbre of much of the music.

Andersen himself is as magisterial as ever on bass. Like Eberhard Weber, he has brought the bass out from underneath its time-keeping, beat-providing function and given it a much enhanced melodic and harmonic role, but without neglecting to provide the essential foundation of the music.

Saxophonist Bendik Høise is clearly a Garbarek acolyte, although he does not achieve the same grandeur of sound and tone, while Frode Alnæs makes sparing but usually cogent contributions on guitar. Bugge Wesseltoft is on keyboards, with Nana Vasconcelos on percussion, and an abstract vocal embellishment to Andersen's gorgeously supple bass on "Revels".

The folk-like thread of the music is broken down only in the opening section of Part II, "Tjovane," which opens predictably enough with an up-tempo folk tune, but takes a sudden lurch sideways into an unexpected jazz-rock idiom which seems to have crept in from another session altogether.

Otherwise, it is a coherent enough piece with some lovely moments, but, like *Roseufule*, I'm not sure it is one I would want to play very often.

KENNY MATHIESON

SIR HARRISON BIRTWISTLE

Earth Dances

Coltara Classics 20012 CD single

BENEDICT MASON

Lightboxes Of England And Wales

Coltara Classics 20012 CD single

ROBERT SAXTON

In The Beginning! Music To Celebrate The Resurrection Of Christ

Coltara Classics 20032 CD single

JOHN TAVENER

The Repentant Thief

Coltara Classics 20052 CD single



sents a progression from 1990's interesting but not really convincing *Roots And Sprouts*, though I still sense that his best is yet to come. There is some wonderful music here, the oud master's incredibly productive relationship with bassist Glen Moore being particularly gratifying, though I'm less convinced by the choice of Sonny Fortune on alto saxophone, and much prefer the pieces without him. Nevertheless all the tracks have something to recommend them and I like the overall feel of creative, brooding urgency that prevails. This is almost a magnificent CD.

The past few years have brought a multitude of amazing voices from all over the world to the attention of Western listeners. Even within these ranks Mohammad Reza Shadjarian is an exceptional musician, being frequently cited as the undisputed master of contemporary Iranian classical music. His

COLLINS CLASSICS have hit on the novel idea of marketing their contemporary British composers in listener-friendly CD "singles". Religion and marine navigation are the big themes in these titles from the first set of issues. Marine navigation first. Benedict Mason's *Lighthouses Of England And Wales* is an offbeat tour round the "phases" of the main Trinity House lighthouses. The "who-oshing" motif is of course the light-house beam briefly bathing the observer and passing on; though even within the brief span of 15 minutes it begins to pall. Nice try, but I think I prefer Shanty Rogers' Lighthouse All-Stars to the Trinity House crew.

Robert Saxton's star is in the ascendant with his recent opera *Caritas*, but the orchestral works here ultimately fail the test of great memorability. In *The Beginning*, which (says the composer) could be about the Genesis story, is in a currently fashionable dark tonality, without saying anything very new. A much fresher treatment of religious themes is found in the John Tavener disc. A member of the Orthodox Church, to Tavener the undorned Greek chant "means so much more... than so-called great Western music". The familiar minor mode used in *The Repentant Thief* could, in less skilful hands, have amounted to exotic kitsch. Andrew Marriner's clamour is to the fore, but the chamber forces don't allow for concerto-style confrontation. If 20th century music has tended to focus more on ritual than narrative, Tavener combines the two elements through contrasting sections of "Refrain", "Lament" and "Dance". The dance sections become increasingly frenzied with the thief – one of those crucified with Christ – "dancing blindly towards salvation".

Whatever Harrison Birtwistle's uneasy relationship with classical tradition, it won't be as tenuous as John Tavener's. The older composer has protested "What I write seems so obvious to me, I can't see what the problem is". Whether this is innocence or arrogance, don't expect to take in *Earth Dances* after a couple of playings. For some time up to its completion in 1986, this was the work without a name, the much-anticipated successor to *Sacred Theatre*. It is only Birtwistle's second work for symphony orchestra – the live recording is from a Prom performance last year by the BBC SO, though the audience has been edited out.

A restless soundscape, with a few brief

moments of repose, *Dances* compels the listener's attention through its mass of detail. The geological metaphor – the shifting stratifications of the earth's crust – serves as an anchor for the listener's imagination and a guide to the flexibility of the scoring, with percussion prominent. Despite a complete lack of talent for self-publicity, Harrison Birtwistle is now receiving international recognition, which *Earth Dances* justifies.

The "singles" retail at around £4.99 a throw. Best to go for the longer-play ones – Birtwistle at 37" rather than Mason at 15" (unless you're into lighthouses, that is). A suggestion for the next set – Hugh Wood's wonderful Piano Concerto, premiered at the Proms by Joanna MacGregor.

ANDY HAMILTON

ANTHONY BRAXTON

London (Solo) 1988

Impetus IMP LP 18818 LP

ANTHONY BRAXTON

3 Compositions Of New Jazz

Delmark DD-15 CD

MR UNPUNKY Mr Icecold Mr AntiJazz. By now the epiphet reads like awards for valour in a war not of his choosing: he does what he does; others continue to be upset that he doesn't do what he doesn't do. I was at the ICA solo performance here recorded, entranced by his offplanet rigour, and then talked in the interval to friends, young and old, who rolled out the ancient critique with renewed fervour. If he tried these exploration exercises tonight for unprepared suppercubbers at Ronnie's or the Jazz Cafe, he'd be booed off. The gap between Braxton 68 – his first work – and Braxton 88 is a good deal less than the gap between either and Jazz-ashe-is-all-too-routinely-spoken. "(840M)-Realize-44M", first of the 3 *Compositions*, beginning with its desolate home-made singing, was used on the soundtrack to *Who Needs A Heart*: his version of "Nauma" on *Solo (London)* 1988 carries the same desperate, unsettled, near-lunatic survivor-force – far later, and far lonelier, but still there.

"We're on the eve of the complete fall of Western ideas and life-values," he told John Lawler in those far-off days; with Mihal Richard Abrams (p, etc), Leo Smith (t, etc) and Leroy Jenkins (vn, etc), he was "in the process of developing more meaningful

values." The claim – back then, anyway – would have been that the moral framework and languages they were working out would serve some sooncome future community; an explanation we could all share in, even those who disagreed. 3 *Compositions* is recognisably Chicagoan: very spaced, a little cracked, provisionally visionary, palpably tragic. It's also, though this was hardly then apparent, pretty much fully-formed Braxton.

Nowadays of course even his language of explanation has turned eerily occult: analysed and categorised by colour, pictogram and number, half-parodic of, half parasitic on the brahmin respectability of the science and the "Western ideas" he once sought to criticise. Habitual abstraction becomes a kind of necessary protective shell for a project otherwise far too nakedly utopian (music beyond



or between traditions: music begun again).

But the sounds themselves – scrapped of this or that misleading jargon-armor – are still drenched in the same anomalous, courageous sound of his saxophone; a kind of lament for all the aspects of communal African American art he doesn't want to participate in. The black kid who warmed first to Paul Desmond and *Purvis Lannier* has fashioned something that doesn't belong anywhere in the present; it makes demands on a happier future where its cross-traditional oddities would simply go unnoticed.

MARK SINKER

ARTHUR BLYTHE

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Arthur Blythe was widely seen as the likeliest contender for jazz voice of the 1980s, a scenario which quickly faded in what seemed like a loss of direction. Always a player who liked to range across styles and combinations anyway, Blythe's willingness to move in many directions ultimately led to a loss of focus.

Hipnotism is not a decisive return to the promise of the late-1970s, but taken along with the World Saxophone Quartet's *Metamorphosis* (Blythe, a long time dep for Oliver Lake, finally replaced him), it does suggest that the saxophonist still has plenty to say.

Unusual instrumental combinations have long been one of his trademarks, and *Hipnotism* is no exception. It varies from solo through to septet, and uses Bob Stewart's tuba instead of string-bass as the bottom line, alongside Don Moye's unconventional approach to kit drums. Kelvin Bell is excellent on guitar, while Gust Tsilis and Art Tuncboyaci provide various shades of percussion.

Harriet Blauett guests on three tunes (all compositions are by Blythe), and the music comes closest to the WSQ at those points, notably in the two-horn scabbling and shifts from blues riffs to free-form cacophony of "Master Of Fact". Blythe dominates the solo role throughout, but it has more the feel of a voice emerging from the common conversation, rather than the traditional soloist and accompaniment model.

His tonal qualities remain highly distinctive, and his command of registers from swing through to a kind of Ornette-ish acidity are impressive, but the set ultimately lacks the sparkle and sense of real ensemble adventure which would elevate it above the "interesting" category. Blythe, though, is moving in the right direction again.

KENNY MATHIESON

CARCASS

Neuroticism - Descending The Insalubrious
Tasche MOSH 42CD CD

STRAWS in the wind: the deathmetal freejazz crossover, given status by Last Exit and Naked City (even though it already existed), is already threatened by backlash from some of its earliest fans stateside: it's giving itself pretensions to political seriousness that court exactly the wrong kind of respectable art-house attention.

Not so over here yet: where on little labels like Earache and Parabolic and Claw Futz the marriage has only just reached first-best-nutty-bliss phase: its young pioneers are still having ridiculous fun exploring and over-driving all aspects of the form: not just ultramantic (or else snailpace) guitar-riffing and drumclatter, but also the frankly 17th century religious tenor of post-thrash metallic and worldview (a press release for Carcass labelmate Cathedral's debut *Forest Of Equilibrium* promises "a guaranteed dark celebration of pained misery", and rubber-stamps the claim with five exclamation marks).

Carcass "celebrate" cannibalism, bodily decay and the bloody, er, pleasures of dissection, in a densely overwritten world of forensic scientific Latin and guitars like whirling blades. "Making hash of the spumous erubescence/all natural compassion removed/ the newly fully developed boiled as sprouted fuddler/matrilinear murder - cordon bleu" ("Pedigree Butchery"), delivered in a high velocity croak, over their disciplined variegated slicing engine of a sound.

You can if you want choose to dismiss all this as sign of a degenerate culture cranking for evermore extreme thrills: you can also tell yourself it's the opposite, a half-aware and fully intelligent struggle against dehumanisation and the collapse of values, a way of living with the last taboo, of liberating the skull beneath the skin in the sterility of the modern machine-age. Either way, they show surprising resource generating rich grinding texture from a goof-off tradition which is only despised now by the slow-of-mind or the cloth-of-our.

HOPEY GLASS

BENNY CARTER

3, 4, 5

Verve 849 395-2 CD

JOURNALIST W. Patrick Hinely recently wrote about engineers at a multinational record company, wearing headphones while remastering old tracks; the phones "were not patched into the control board - they were listening to who knows what on personal cassette players while the tapes rolled on". This could explain a lot, but Verve's historical reissues are the work of Phil Schaap and, having watched his audio restoration in progress twice, I know it's as painstaking as his background notes.

The jewel of this compilation by the consummate Carter is the 33 minutes with Teddy Wilson and Jo Jones, which for as many years was left in the vaults in favour of the contemporaneous alto-piano-drums session with Louis Bellson and Art Tatum. Bellson in fact appears here for 31 minutes by a groovy quartet including bassist George Duvivier and the Hank Jones-like piano of Don Abney, while the quintet has Carter with the Oscar Peterson trio plus one. Only a careful perusal of the notes confirms that these 13 minutes are previously unreleased.

Carter's playing can be an acquired taste, featuring Hawkins-like phrase-shapes without the attack and passion, and Parker's harmonic knowledge without the rhythmic immediacy. Yet his serpentine outpourings are compelling, even hypnotic, and the trio



set especially shows his neat arranging touches to advantage. A good thing too since all the tunes are standards, except for an obscure Struff Smith ballad done with Peterson (and with a tiat interlude from Herb Ellis almost worthy of Jim Hall). So thanks to Phil Schaap, and many more to the unstoppable Carter.

BRIAN PRIESTLEY

CIKADA

Plays Wallin Hedstrom Ore Persen

Aurore A4961 CD

NEW MUSIC is well supported in Norway. Cikada, an ensemble from Oslo, demonstrate the accuracy and coherence top players can achieve given ample rehearsal time (increasingly rare for new compositions in the UK). This CD includes two pieces premiered at 1991's Huddersfield Contemporary Music

Festival: Ase Hedström's *Sorts* and John Persen's *Et Cetera*.

The best thing about the string quartet is its ability to generate tension, and Hedström concentrates on that. *Sorts* uses extremes of playing to whirl the four strings into a single expressive entity. The structures are startlingly original yet drawn with deft logic.

Likewise refusing to use the format to indulge retro-baroque or folksy sentimentality, Cecile Ore's string quartet *Præmii Subitæ* realizes a "sound-sculpture" reminiscent of electronic music. It is bigger-sounding than *Sorts*, simpler and more dramatic, but still rawly emotional and intense. If you want an alternative to the seeming monopoly Kronos have on new quartet compositions, investigate.

Rolf Wallin's... *though what made it has*



gone... sets words by the Russian poet Osip Mandelstam. Like all the ensemble, Hilde Torgersen (soprano) and Kenneth Karlsson (piano) are rabidly good musicians. The vocal line starts in hisses and cries, then the Russian gives way to English, allowing images to hover over the piano. It has some of Berio's openness, but the energy and patterning are all its own. The nearest comparison might be the punk-improv caterwaulings of Manchester's priceless Honkies (always a good sign when classical music parallels developments outside the academy). Its 14 minutes pass in a flash.

The CD concludes with John Persen's *Et Cetera*. This is written in the post-Systems "bright" style favoured by Icebreaker composers. The succession of ideas is so arbitrary that attention fades after five minutes (and you still have 20 to go...). Despite this

nod in the direction of the minimal nursery school, Cilada are evidently a new music ensemble to set beside Ikoon, Acroche Note, Asko and the InterContemporan Strunning. BEN WATSON

FREDERICK DELIUS

*Paris, Piano Concerto,
Dance Rhapsody No. 1, Life's Dance*
Unicorn Kanchana DKPCD91118

BORN (BRADFORD, 1862) into a country with a long-broken musical tradition, Delius, like Elgar, had to find inspiration and technique elsewhere. He emerges as the pioneer third streamer in that his main sources included the singing of blacks on a Florida orange plantation and the disciplines of the Leipzig Conservatoire. Less direct influences were Scandinavian literature and landscapes and the company of painters during his Paris years. All this took a while to put together and it is only in the nocturnal "Paris" (1899) that we find, amid the ardent chromatic intensity of the slow central section, the first quintessentially Delian moments.

For this work the model was Richard Strauss's symphonic poems, but Delius's originality is unmistakable, the German composer's energy and elaboration having become retrospective, hope transmuted into regret. "Life's Dance" (1901) represents slightly, and *Dance Rhapsody No. 1* (1908) considerably more mature points on the same line of development. The latter is a theme and variations with some bewitching ideas, as from the solo violin in the penultimate variation. Much less happy as the Concerto (1897). Delius thought naturally in terms of orchestral and vocal sounds yet though he referred to the piano whilst composing he was not able to write effectively for it.

Philip Fowke, the soloist on this first CD recording of the piece, makes out as persuasive a case as possible for the Concerto, but it is certain that owners of this record will turn more often to the three other works. They are heard from the Royal Philharmonic Orchestra in acutely perceptive interpretations by Norman del Mar, a conductor with much experience of this composer. The recording is finely balanced and the listener is particularly aware of the woodwind, Delius's writing for which accounts in considerable measure for the individuality of his orchestral sound.

MAX HARRISON

DORAN/STUDER/ BURRI/MAGNENAT

*Musik Für Kontrabasse, Elektrische Gitarre
& Schlagzeug*
ECM 847 911-2 CD

CORPORATE ART

Corporate Art
JMT 849 155-2 CD

CHRISTY DORAN's versatility and mastery of rock and jazz guitar is undeniably proven on these two albums (even though "Corporate Art" is very much a collaborative affair).

Musik Für Zwei Kontrabasse is an improvised collection, largely Doran-composed, with an all-Swiss line-up of drummer Fredy Studer, bass player Bobby Burri (ex-Ozm cohorts) and bass player Olivier Magnenat. Sadly, from the memories of Doran's meteoric *Red Ties And Tied Arms* disc, this recording fails to engage and intrigue in anything like the same way. Though the opening track "Siren" is a gutsy and foxing outing - heavy-rock drums, mangled guitar and two thundering acoustic basses that switch into deceptive rhythms and wild sonic soundscapes - it's a misleading taster. Its vigour is never really matched on the remaining tracks. It's not that the pummeling drums are monorhythmic or that Doran fails to supply exhilarating bursts of Hendrix-inspired wildness. It's rather that the tracks are just a bit too meandering and out of focus. The thin production quality doesn't help either.

Corporate Art, on the other hand, will blow your socks off. It's a new project that has come about through tour manager Ralph Gluch's connections with the four musicians - ex-Miles Davis sax and flute player Gary Thomas, bass player Mark Helias, drummer Bobby Previte and Doran. All nine tracks are relentlessly direct (even the ballads) and bring to mind the cold angularity of Steve Coleman/M-Base, the melodic elasticity of Scofield, the extravagant languor of Frisell and the wildness of Hendrix. Doran in particular weaves and stabs at the structures with many of these nuances, though always with his own electro individuality. Thomas offers some aggressive and gritty soloing with his hard, glassy sax sound - wonderfully piercing and pulverisingly fast throughout. Similarly, Previte keeps the whole affair very much on the boil with a restless attack of

rolls and splashy cymbals amidst the regular rock/funk beats.

Corporate Art grabs you with its brutish energy and hooky melodies. The familiar bones of rock and funk are there but remoulded with cerebral intensity. A killer of an album. Love the lime green disc too.

LAURA CONNELLY

NICK DRAKE

Fruit Tree

Harmonia Mundi HNCD 5102 1CD

VAN MORRISON's response to the failure of '60s idealism was to enfold himself in fragments of the everyday, of observations of the inescapably concrete, the better to keep not believing in the possibility of real-life utopias, a gruff workman's realist plunging off into the mystic: an antiromantic religiousist who has no truck with any means of escape except mystical transcendence itself.

Drake's path – superficially similar, starting in 1969 with *Five Leaves Left*, an autumnal cousin to *Astral Weeks* (strummed guitar, semi-classical strings, "jazzy" flute, breathily soft singing) – formed differently over two further LPs – *Bryter Layter* (which included players like Richard and Danny Thompson, Chris McGreggor and John Cale), and *Pink Moon* – he dove towards ever starker, monolithically depressive resignation (dying, by accident or design, in 1974, of an overdose of antidepressants, before he could finish a fourth). Too disciplined (as symbolist) and too abstract (as storyteller) in his unhappiness to be accused of mere self-indulgence, his collected songs remain a distillate of solo maverickism, in all its strengths and failings.

His records were collected as *Fruit Tree* some years ago, together with very early and very late unreleased material: now released on CD, so long after the specifics of his unhappy life, it's easier to respond to music like this as symptom than expression – not so much of Drake's own near-austic refusal of rage, than of the generalised romantic isolationism that's the lure and the bane of so much '60s radical art. The point, as Morrison has since proved, is to transport this to its true home: the suburban bedsit. But for unalloyed sexless black pastoral gloom, Drake comes before and still outstings even Richard Thompson.

MARK SINKER

TEDDY EDWARDS

Mississippi Lad

Antilles ANCD/ANC 8769 CD/MC

EDWARDS is an excellent middle-of-the-road tenor player of the James Moody generation, with a tone more personal than his vocabulary perhaps. As a result of remaining based on the West Coast, much like his contemporary Harold Land, he's been seriously underrecorded throughout his career, not only in his own right but in any guise at all. The only work that's brought him any reflected glory is with retrobeatnik Tom Waits and, even though Tom waits for no one, the association has enabled Edwards to tour Europe as a soloist and to make this album.

I wish it was more impressive, but several things diminish its impact. The title-track blues in G (a favourite key for the tenorman) is the best quarter track but the rhythm-section, including Billy Higgins and veteran bassist Leroy Vinnegar, don't get a chance anywhere to stretch out and give Edwards a run for his money. Doubtless for variety there's a sextet frontline on a few tracks; trumpeter Nolan Smith and long-unheard trombonist Jimmy Cleveland solo but – as with that disappointing Andy Hamilton album – the underhearsal and out-of-tuneness of the ensemble get to you after a while.

Blame the producer if you like. Even the sound is dry and unflattering, compared to other recent Antilles releases such as Johnny Griffin's *The Cat*. And two guest appearances by Tom Waits is two too many.

BRIAN PRIESTLEY

RICKY FORD

Hard Groovin'

Mus MCD 5375 CD

WALLACE RONEY

Obsession

Mus MCD 5423 CD

HARD, HARD bop. Ford's is terse and expansive by turns, the powerhouse gestures resolved in his own sound, which owes as much to the swing giants as it does to their successors. Roney's is flat-out tough, crushing, no quarter stuff. Both have trouble sustaining their intensity over a CD's length, both make virtues of the adverbial rush.

Ricky Ford has recorded a lot of albums for

Muse, and they're all worth hearing. This session was made in 1989, but the cast is up-to-the-minute: Roy Hargrove, Geoff Keezer, Bob Hurst, Jeff Watts. Keezer was already doing astonishing things, as both writer and performer: his "Masaman", completely hypnotic, is the outstanding theme here, and his solos invade the bounce and funk of hard bop and add his own inquiring touch. Hargrove is a bit too bright and smart for my taste – Lee Morgan would have made these quicksilver runs a little wittier. Ford himself seems to have approached this one as a kind of fundamental hard bop date: the tunes have titles like "New Bop" and "Hard Groovin'", and the ensembles are merely fits for solos. He's chameleonic – sometimes you think you're hearing the history of the tenor in his playing, and the real Ford is hard



to discern under the layers of Dexter and Hawk and Trane and Sonny – and he often pushes himself into a corner, the closing "Minority", which he does on alto, sounds like the leader blowing his brains out. Altogether an enjoyable record, though.

The key player on Roney's album is Cindy Blackman, whose rolls, cavalry-charge accompaniments and general intensity suggest the record's title. There are a couple of moments on the title piece where the soloists have their tails fanned by Blackman to the point where everything sounds ready to explode. Roney sounds more thoughtful than Hargrove even at high speed, but he has problems defining himself within the braising locale. Thomas, whose flute I think I like better than his wholly bleak tenor, has perhaps the same problem, but since both hornmen are so assured from phrase to

phrase, the fleeting nature of the solos makes less impact than, well, their impact.

The writing, though, is dull. Donald Brown, the pianist, doesn't contribute anything (Roney, Blackman and bassist Christian McBride all do) and he's probably the best composer on hand. On this evidence, though, hard bop will never die. As long as players want to pump iron, they'll play it.

MIKE PESH

FRED FRITH

The Top Of His Head

Made To Measure CD MTM 21 CD

GABOR G KRISTOF

Le Cri du Lézard

Made To Measure CD MTM 25 CD

RAMUNTCHO MATTA "DOMINO ONE"
MADE TO MEASURE VOL.30



DANIEL SCHELL & KARO

The Secret Of Bulch

Made To Measure CD MTM 27 CD

SEIGEN ONO

Nekonoopia Nekomonaua

Made To Measure CD MTM 29 CD

RAMUNTCHO MATTA

Domino One

Made To Measure CD MTM 30 CD

A DEVISION of the Belgian label Crammed Discs, Made To Measure is a sort of virtual-soundtrack house. Its brief is music that was or could have been made as soundtrack, it's the "could have been" that's all-important. The early '80s marked a shift away from music as event to music as background – or in MeoM's rhetoric, "aural garments". All

manner of serious young types who'd once been in fey art bands opted to make music not of or via an Artist's persona, but which instead invoked an "event" elsewhere to justify its existence. Where Eno had led with his Ambient series, the likes of John Fox, David Sylvian and a million Belgians followed. Other aspects of this, the canonisation of Morricone and Nyman, and John Zorn in the radical camp proclaiming an aesthetic of rapid-fire allusion inspired by the Bugs Bunny soundtrack.

The point being that the idea of the "soundtrack" as a real or imagined aesthetic is now part of a rather richer debate than it was at the start of the Made To Measure series (when the label was gunned up in the art-house solemnities of Tuxedomoon and their ilk). But this crop is interesting indeed, if not incendiary. Some are genuinely soundtracks, notably the Frith and the Kristof. Frith's music for a Canadian film about satellite dishes and industrial paranoia sounds very much image-triggered (understandably, since director Peter Metzler took a hand in it). Frith's approach is slightly more Ry Cooder than Bernard Herrmann, with a barren guitar theme bookending fragments of collaged cyber-racket, as strange bedfellow here, Canadian chanteuse Jane Siberry gets to sing one of her charming songs about dogs and trains.

I'd rather have heard it in the context of the movie; Gabor G Kristof's music for a Swiss film, though, stands perfectly on its own. Admittedly, it sounds exactly as you'd imagine Swiss film music to sound like – lyrical, laden with acoustic guitar, accordion and nostalgia. But it's extraordinarily graceful, and the only record I've heard for ages which reconciles me to the idea of dinner-party music. It also features a squib called "Radio-Cassette", which is as it seems – the best evocation of naïf transistor noise since The Raspberries' "Overnight Sensation".

The changeful Seigen Ono – after assorted essays into new-age decorativeness and discordant music for catwalks – is opting for a gentler line in guitar acoustics, with an overall Brazilian slant. To mince words, it's pleasant, with the exception of the over-somber four-piece suite "Berliner Nichte". But it's notable for Ono and Evan Lurie trading variations on a delicately lugubrious piano piece, and for the curious treat of Zorn (him again!) doing a lifting Sean Getz

pastiche.

Ramuntcho Matta is the son of the painter and an erstwhile collaborator with literary cut-up merchant Brion Gysin. *Domino One* collates snippets from a play, a ballet and Matta's own video, for which he keeps the choice crop. There's a lot of Jon Hassell influence in here; Matta is adept at weaving variants on the funky "haunted undergrowth" sound. The best moment, and certainly the leastest thing I've heard all year, is "O Clapo", which suggests two cars licking a naad to orgasm.

The most idiosyncratic of the bunch, and the scariest (bar Frith's) is the Daniel Schell. You wouldn't believe that five men who so resemble the Oyster Band could produce music this dense and austere. The band (clarinet, cello, keyboards, percussion and that amorphous thing, the Chapman stick) are augmented variously by strings and glowering choral vocals, in an imposing set of neo-classical sobriety. There are stabs of pastoral, mediaeval and Indian play-back pastiche, and at times, it gets caught up in academic studiousness. But it has an agenda that's very much its own, and isn't about to let any visuals – real or imagined – stand in its way. Not necessarily the high point, but certainly the salient one, in a persuasive stack.

JONATHAN ROMNEY

GOD

Lao

Pathological Records/

Perma de Contrepoint Deutschland Path 09/PPF106 CD

"RECORDED LIVE AT St Mary's Church", you can only hope that the Fabric Committee have the number of a first-class exorcist. There'll be fetches and hoges flying out of the hymn-books for months.

The key to all this, as to almost anything he puts his busy hands to, is the drumming of E Prevost (everyone gets installed). Paired with Ciccotelli and three bassists and a guitar, he carves out huge satanic dubs that are a kissing cousin of Blind Idiot God or the early, Wobbly days of PIL. The scores are almost supernumerary, though T Hodgkinson's unmistakable alto cuts up through the slime with some very humane diction.

But how would it be if "Fucked" were called "One Flesh" and "Sick Puppy" sparked all that drunken underbred Christopher Marlowe stuff about God being Dog spelt backwards? And how would it be if this had been

recorded in some acoustically lively studio with a bland name, and no opportunity to register shock at the setting? Mightn't we then be saying that this is actually very spiritual music? There are elements of Bruckner brass (*montate maunda*) in the horns, and the progression of the pieces is not so very different from Rued Langgaard's enormous God-bothering symphonies.

Shocked? Yes, undoubtedly. But mainly by the recognition that something as directly nihilistic and extreme can seem so 'positive' and human-natured. Seek out and deploy

BRIAN MORTON

BARRY HARRIS

Live At Maybeck Recital Hall Vol 12

Concord CCD 9476 CD/MC

ROGER KELLAWAY

Live At Maybeck Recital Hall Vol 11

Concord CCD 9470 CD/MC

STEVE KUHN

Live At Maybeck Recital Hall Vol 13

Concord CCD 9484 CD/MC

GERRY WIGGINS

Live At Maybeck Recital Hall Vol 8

Concord CCD 9450 CD/MC

MAYBECK RECITAL Hall only holds 50 people, and this Berkeley, CA venue seems to bring out the best in all of the pianists who've been recorded there in Concord's ongoing series. It's been an interesting choice of players so far, and these four contenders hold the sequence up as stylishly as you like.

Barry Harris, at least, is no stranger to solo recitals, though it's been a while since his solo records for Xanadu. He opens "All God's Children Got Rhythm" with a turbulent tribute to Monk, but the ensuing bebop-pery is more like a nod to Bud Powell, who loved to play that tune; as if the notion had occurred to Barry too, he then does Powell's "I'll Keep Loving You". The set proceeds like that, one theme leading ruminatively to another. But there's little meandering, no aimlessness: Harris is loyal to bop's crispness, even though these days he confers as much grace and polish on it. Choice of tunes is ingenious: "Gone Again", "Lucky Day", "Parker's Mood", "Would You Like To Take A Walk". Measure for measure, this is as good as any record Harris has made.

I enjoyed Gerald Wiggins's disc without being much turned over or engrossed by it.

Wig despatches 11 standards and a blues with solicitous care and good humour, but one doesn't feel the earth-deep intimacy that a pianist like Jaki Byard, say, can produce even with simple ideas and treatments. Very agreeable, nevertheless.

Roger Kellaway (bafflingly described as a "bearded, articulate genius" by Leonard Feather on the sleeve) will be the least familiar name of these four to many, but with most of his work done outside a strict jazz milieu he seldom gets our attention anyway. Most of his eight pieces are done as rhapsodic ballads of one kind or another, but concentrated rather than dreamy is the description that comes to mind. The great fastness he creates out of Hoagy Carmichael's "New Orleans", for instance, or the rising and falling intensity of "How Deep Is The Ocean" suggest a pianist who has an awful lot of his own to say and still has the composure to retain the spirit of the originals. His own "I'm Still In Love With You" and "Love Of My Life" are more demurely dealt with, although Kellaway's technique makes even straightforward playing seem grand.

Steve Kuhn is even more expansive, with three of his six solos clocking in around ten minutes each. Sometimes one gets the impression that he's parading his accomplishments: there's an almost fantastical ramble before he gets to the melody of "Autumn In New York", and suggestions of "Bebop" and "A Night In Tunisia" in the ensuing developments seem more like baiting the listener than anything. I prefer "I Remember You", which also loses itself, but at least has more of a thematic core to the improvisation. The smaller-scale "Old Folks" and a rather plaintive "The Meaning Of The Blues" give us Kuhn's pocket-size version of himself: harmonies caressed, rhythms sprung. That's more like it.

RICHARD COOK

JOHN LEE HOOKER

The Complete Chess Folk Blues Sessions

MCA 18335 CD

IN THE wake of Johnny Lee's third lap on the chart-sear bandwagon, currently showing at a record shop near you, record companies are giving themselves hernias in their rush to issue every note which the Boogie Man has recorded. Some such notes should have been allowed decently to slumber — his *folk* acoustic sessions are prime examples — but this CD is an outstanding example of intelligent use

of the medium in the service of good taste.

Of course, the music isn't "folk blues" at all: cut in 1966, it's diamond-tipped electric blues and boogie, with Hooker in great voice and supported by fellow Detroiters Eddie "Guitar" Burns and an unknown but able rhythm section who manfully keep pace with his rhythmic meanderings. But the best news is that the nine well-loved tracks from the original *Real Folk Blues* LP are joined by nine from the same session which have never before seen the light of day.

Hooker does what he did on his first 1948 recordings and what, on the evidence of his splendid *Mr. Lucky* album, he's still doing today: he sings songs which have little melody, rarely rhyme or scan, and in which a key change is so rare an event as to merit a round of applause. That he does so fascina-



tungly and with total success is a measure of the man's unique talent.

The previously-issued numbers will be familiar to most readers (and if not, they damn well should be), their high points being "Let's Go Out Tonight" with its jaunty beat over which the Hooker raps his invitation with such salacious menace that no parent in their right mind would allow their daughter within three blocks of him. But the nine unissued contain almost as much good music and a few surprises too: there's the personalised version of Otis Rush's "I Can't Quit You Baby", a slowed-down rework of his "House Rent Boogie" in the guise of "House Rent Blues", a clangorous boogie workout on the old "Catfish Blues" theme, and an outstanding, fathom-deep slow blues in "This Land Is Nobody's Land". Space precludes an examination of every track, but



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MIKE ATHERTON

LEOŠ JANÁČEK

The Caring Little Vixen/Taras Bulba

EMI CD6 7542122 CD

A POWERFUL man, Simon Rattle. Could anyone else have insisted that if the Royal Opera House wanted him to make his debut there, the house would have to revise its policy of performing opera in the original language so that Rattle could conduct an English *Vixen*? It suits the Rattle image of acceptable and accessible modernity, especially as *Vixen* lies just outside the central repertoire.

But setting opera on stage and hearing it at home are different experiences. In the theatre, Janáček's conversational style loses its edge if you're struggling to penetrate Czech syllables while following the stage pictures. In your living-room, even an opera in English requires attention to the libretto if you're to keep track of the plot. Recorded opera is, necessarily if only partially, a reading experience, in a way that isn't true in the opera house, much as subtitles try to make it so.

So is there much to be gained from a new recording of *Vixen* in English when there is already a superb recording in Czech, conducted by Charles Mackerras (Decca)? Well, yes, as it turns out. The same common-tongue immediacy you get in the opera house survives, albeit in less pointed ways. You more quickly get to know the musical and dramatic contours if you're not grappling with the sense of every single utterance.

Yet in other ways Rattle can't quite equal Mackerras. This is a difficult work, not because of Janáček's music, which is eccentric but accessible; but because an opera about a vixen, a fox, their cubs and sundry other animals – some human – can easily become just cute. It requires a certain abrasiveness to match Janáček's acerbic vision of life in death, death in life. Rattle is inclined to let the musical tension relax. It isn't simply a matter of tempo, but it's suggestive that Rattle always takes a little longer than Mackerras, as if the way to acknowledge the shadow of death is to slow the music's heartbeat.

Nor is Rattle's excellent cast a consistent match for the singers backed with Mackerras. In particular, Thomas Allen as the Forester who learns human frailty from the Vixen's misadventures sounds veiled and imprecise. On the other hand, where Mackerras fleshes out the second CD in the set with an orchestral suite derived from the music we've just listened to, Rattle gives us *Taras Bulba*, a separate and substantial work.

In the end, perhaps the comparisons matter little. Rattlers will buy the new recording anyway, and they will get a distinctive performance which, thanks to its use of the vernacular, will convince many who might otherwise avoid Czech opera. If I prefer the Mackerras recording, that isn't to suggest that Rattle's version is only for wimps who can't stand the sound of Czech.

NICK KIMBERLEY

KENNY KIRKLAND

Kenny Kirkland

GRP 96572 CD/LP/MC

A NEAT piece of work. Dave Grusin's glossy GRP production doesn't do its worst and anyway what's wrong with a nice haircut (credit: Roxanna Floyd) and a good 'stylist' (Debra Autrey). If you don't have a high disposable income and bugs of style you might of course just settle for some good music; you'll find that too on Kenny Kirkland's eponymous album. (Hasn't that word been banned yet?) [Album? Eponymous? Music? – Ed.]

If Deben in charge of style, Wynton M (as he's called in the credits) must be responsible for substance. This is very much the Marsalis brand of modal dissonance and rhythmic fluidity, but laced with some lighter Latin-inflected numbers which Wynton would turn his nose up at. Don Alas on percussion is prominent on the latter, and I can't say I have any strong preference about these either way.

Of the more muscular material, Kenny's own "Seepian Faith", very much Marsalis *Think Of One* vintage, stands out. Branford comes in strongly on soprano towards the end here, not wanting to seal the show. Monk's "Criss-Cross" works out much better than Bud Powell's "Celia". Be-bop lines sound so dated in a contemporary setting, as Steve Williamson might also have discovered, and

the theme comes as a curious anti-climax. "Criss-Cross" is another matter, and its dark, forbidding logic is brilliantly revealed against a churning backdrop of percussion and electric keyboards. But then (all together now) Monk was never a be-bopper.

Lennie Tristano would have been aghast at the way the fast tracks seem almost to double their tempos by the time they're over (in the end he resorted to pre-recorded bass and drums). Ornette's "When Will The Blues Leave" is a bad example of this, and gets treated as a launch for a rather anonymous blues (Roderick Ward on alto). Kirkland's trio number "Clance" and Wayne Shorter's "Ava Maria" are in contrast both lyrical and eventful. Use your programme facility to get a good LP's length of very worthwhile music.

ANDY HAMILTON



DAVID MURRAY QUINTET

Remembrances

DIW 849 CD

DAVID MURRAY QUARTET

Shakti's Warrior

DIW 850 CD

DAVID MURRAY BIG BAND

David Murray Big Band

DIW 851 CD

DAVID MURRAY! David Murray! He can't stop making records, and we can't seem to get enough of them. Here are five LPs' worth – the quartet and big band discs both run to double-album length, the quintet is a mere 45:46 – and they're all at least worth hearing/having, at their best rising to the crest of Murray's work. *Remembrances* sounds

almost tossed-off, a hot July day in 1990 with Hugh Ragin, Dave Burrell, Wilber Morris and Tani Tabbal, the atmosphere recalling some of the leader's early records like *Flowers For Alberti*. There are a stack of buzzing, hissing solos from Ragin as well as the leader, with a sorrowful "Sometimes I Feel Like A Motherless Child" among the themes tackled, as well as an oddball Dave Burrell piece, "Popolo Papiolo", that sounds like one of his opera excerpts. Energising.

The big band record gives us a rare chance to hear this mighty 18-piece ensemble at length. As conducted by Butch Morris, the band sounds majestically ragged – perhaps as much due to its transient nature as to anything intentional – but colourful, powerful, radiantly expressive. The opener, "Paul Gonzales", is a whopping piece that runs over 17 minutes, marches through some grandstand

along on a low heat that hums in the air. "High Priest" shows what skilful players can do over a simple riff-vamp, and they do a lot. Pullen's loose, funky manner will knock over listeners who only know his ultra-brainy piano work – he sneaks that in as a subtext – and Cyrille's flexible beat keeps everyone alert even as they're gliding. Best of all, naturally, is Murray's voluble tenor, front and centre and making sure we know it. Everything comes with his thick, grand, saturating sound, a force that mesmerises as it uncorks the spirit. It's, it's... David Murray! David Murray! DAVID MURRAY!

RICHARD COOK

OREGON

Always, Never, And Forever

veritas vbt2075 CD

WORLD MUSIC is a term for a cultural relativism, which abandons involvement for uncritical appreciation. Perfectly consumerist, perfectly postmodern. Once pioneers of worldmusic fusion, Oregon now make clear their connection to that other music of unproblematic consumption: muzak. Only in LA.

In 1984 their original tabla player Collin Walcott was killed in a traffic accident. He was a brilliant percussionist, holding his own with Elvin Jones on the latter's classic encounter with them (*Together*, 1976). His replacement, Trilok Gurtu, is also a stunning player – as he proved when he toured with John McLaughlin in 1988 – but he cannot do anything with this set of trite themes. Oboist Paul McCandless used to play; now he just twitters. Ralph Towner supplies the usual synths. On "When The Fire Burns Low" Glen Moore's piano introduction has you expecting Linda Ronstadt to pipe up at any moment. Instead you get – well, nothing much, really.

Only on "Big Fat Orange" – a Walcott composition, interestingly enough – do we get a taste of the blues (a music that traces the dialectic of a true worldmusic: a conflict between the tempered scale and something else). The title track is acoustic fusion: at least the CD finishes in something other than new age meandering. But for the rest – Oregon begone!

BEN WATSON

LOU REED

Magn And Lost

Sac CD 9 26662-2-PR CDLP MC

AFTER 1995 John Cale collaboration *Songs For Drilla* and his latest disc, Lou Reed must be counted as rock's finest elegy writer. That he is number one in a field of one (Neil Young's *Tougher The Night* was a brilliant one-off) doesn't detract from his achievement any. Outside the German filmmaker Hans Jürgen Syberberg, he is one of the few artists who understands that the work of mourning is for the benefit of the living, even as it is dedicated to the dead. His death songs walk that fine line between seeing to the needs of the survivors, among whom he of course numbers himself, and the desire to tackle dying head on with an unerring candour that doesn't betray the departed through awkward lapses into sentimentality.

Reed's preferred line-up of talking-sung, bass, drums and guitar – with minimal overdub and embellishment – is ideally suited to the elegiac form. The one minor quibble comes in the classical references of the titles making up the song cycle, which sound like an unnecessary bid for the academic respectability Reed seems to desire. The other occasional Reed failings – lazy plain talking schemes, pointlessly venomous delivery – this time resolve into the whole. If its qualities go unnoticed on first listening, the music – hard, dignified, chiselled to perfection – is transparent in the manner of prose that lodges itself in the brain and only in the memory makes itself felt. There's no gap between word and note, few lines are quotable out of context, yet together they accurately describe the feelings of frustration, guilt and loss on the part of the living and the anger and terror of the prematurely dying. Over and over Reed skilfully conjures, in deceptively simple verse and some well-judged guitar chimes, that strange state of transition between life and death. In "Harry's Circumcision", the real-time of dying is befuddled by the painkilling drugs that turn random recall into weird hallucination. And in the title track, the most constructive work of mourning yet committed to disc, Reed converts fear of dying into wonder – its stunning coda keeps you hanging onto that final moment to the very last. **BRA KORE**

ORPHY ROBINSON

When Tomorrow Comes

Blue Note CDP 7985812 CD/MC

I HAVE two confessions to make. I loathe the sound of the flute – lyrical and charming



solos and suggests Ellingtonian spirit if not letter. There are two mystifying solos by whistler Joel Brandon (Duke would have raised his eyebrows at that, though I doubt if he'd have turned away from the piano with his arms swinging), and if the piece hardly makes reference to Gonzales, then nor do "Lester" and "Ben" particularly invoke their dedicatees. If anything, the trombonist on "Ben" (Craig Harris?) outblows Mr Murray. There are weak passages, and Tabbal doesn't have the wallop to make this big band really swing, but they make a great sound.

Shakell's Warrior is another record that reminded me of jazz's most elementary virtue: it *sounds great*. Stanley Franks arrives on guitar, Don Pullen handles organ, Andrew Cyrille is at the drums, and they all sound glorious. Try "In The Spirit", which simmers

though others assure me it is. And I was suffering from an acute hangover when it came to reviewing this cruelly titled record (*For God's sake - Ed*). It is a shame that both of the above impaired my enjoyment of this excellent album from vibeman Orphy, new recruit to Blue Note. Best played *loud* for maximum impact, that could easily be mistaken for a showcase for the considerable talents of flautist Rowland Sutherland. The most painful moment in this otherwise compelling set appears in "Jigsaw": Rowland is in full effect, and overly cute orchestration transports this into the hey-nony-nony-nymphs-&-shepherds territory. This is fine, I'm sure, in its time and place but this *ain't* Handel. Pity this track appears twice, too.

But enough trivialities. *When Tomorrow Comes* is ultimately a marvelous achievement, and has all the makings of a good Hitchcock: suspenseful, challenging, innovative, menacing. Respect, indeed, is due to Orphy and co-writer Joe Bashoran (also featured on keyboards). Top tunes have got to include the whimsical "Bach To First Bass", and "Bad Means Beautiful". Orphy is at his most tyrannical, with discreet accompaniment. As in the rest of this album, there is a greater debt owed to the M-Base mob than past masters - best described, perhaps, as Lionel Hampton on acid (*It is? - Ed*).

Orphy, currently one of the most happening musicians and composers around, has previously teamed up to record with artists such as Mica Paris, Courtney Pine, Jazz Warriors, Andy Sheppard, Imagination, Working Week and sensual jazz-funk band Savanna. *When Tomorrow Comes*, his own venture, sees him stepping out with his sextet Anavas, an unusual combination of drums, flute, double bass, kora/cello, keyboards and vibes/marimba. Orphy expresses himself more than adequately, when he allows himself the opportunity - but oddly enough it is a disappointment that this album is such a coherent team effort, since it leaves insufficient room for his own soloing. I look forward to even more brazen offerings from this man of our time. *Offerings from the flute.*

CAT BASS

ERIK SATIE

Alone, For A Second

Decca 425 236-2 CD

OF CONTEMPORARY music's founding fathers, Erik Satie has perhaps engendered

more visitations, re-readings and *homages* than any other. Cage declared his interest by transcribing *Socrate* for two pianos. Camarata Mugged him up a la Wendy Carlos; their 1972 album, *Erik Satie: The Velvet Gentleman*, seriously switched a generation on. Even Japan had Satie hidden amongst the Max Factor (where else did *Nightporter* get those heavy cadential pauses?). And now here - with the Modern Sinfonietta - is Thomas Wilbrandt, former assistant to von Karajan and founder of Berlin Phil splinter orchestra the Berliner Kammer-Akademie, a conductor whose motto is *Tradition + Innovation = Future*.

For each generation to attempt re-writing Satie in its own image is no bad feat for him. Satie's structures - cunning, loose formulations - lend themselves to a future filled with new transpositions and new instruments. But don't be deceived: it takes more than vague appreciation of the, um, *eternal waifiness* of (say) *Gymnopédie* to do Satie justice. The success of Wilbrandt's arrangements on *Alone's* 14 tracks lie in a deft economy which only embraces the modulations of the original text.

The innovative part of *Alone* is an acoustic sound treatment, some taped voices, minimal electronics against the Modern Sinfonietta, precisely led by Alexander Balanescu. Here is little to remind you of Wilbrandt's *Electric* v., a folly which sounded like Dr Who meets Vivaldi (said by those who loved it to be very *postmodern*). In leaving Satie unresolved, harmonies hanging from a cobweb made of pauses, Wilbrandt has penetrated the very heart of his subject's exploratory freedoms. And a sublime heart it is, too. LOUISE GRAY

STERIOD MAXIMUS

Quilombo

Big Cat BB028 CD/LP

JIM THIRLWELL has been working under various Foetus pseudonyms for the past 10 years. Method acting madness, his songs create a world painted as black as his humour, populated with rednecks, serial killers and other sociopaths. This new project, Steroid Maximus, instigated a radical change of direction, away from the aural snuff legacy. His voyeurism (temporarily?) satiated, with *Quilombo*, he's concentrating on portraying his own inner space.

An instrumental dreamscape is being

mapped out, all boundaries open, frontiers explored. Cham gang lullabies, big band thrash, ghoulish sea shanties, psychedelic mambo and avant garde serenades mesmerise by their juxtaposition. The exclusion of voice - and, by extension, a focal point - helps to maintain the atmospheres created by 1991's most influential instrument of disorientation: the sampler. The effected samples - bells, babies, whips, monks, accordions, kotos, strings etc - and equivalent stylistic conjunctions create an eerie, hallucinatory environment. Judging by such evidence, the psychological side effect of adopting deviant reality during the past decade have left its mark on Thirlwell's brain. Anxiety and unease permeate the recording, where memories continue to haunt, and terror whispers.

Quilombo explores a modern techno psychedelia, creating and highlighting dis-



turbing inner visions, veering between the surreal joyride of "Frightious" and the nightmare scenario of "Phantom Misarrange". Music which feeds on fear and contradiction.

Musically, the nearest comparable work would be John Zorn's film scores. But where Zorn excels in high speed action shock tactics, Steroid Maximus opts for suspense. *Quilombo* is an absolute spinechiller.

K. MARTIN

CLARK TERRY AND BOB BROOKMEYER

Gingerbread

Masterstream MDCD 711 CD

The Power Of Positive Swingin'

Masterstream MDCD 723 CD

THE IMPORTANCE of the "New Thing" and the work of certain key musicians of the 1960s, not least Coleman, Coltrane and Miles Davis, has effectively wiped the ledger clean of any references to the decidedly "old thing" verities of the Clark Terry-Bob Brookmeyer Quintet. Yet the group managed to gain considerable popularity, despite the more fashionable and widely reported events occurring elsewhere in jazz. At the end of the 1960s, for example, they even secured a major record company deal with CBS.

The pairing of Mumbles and Grumbles brought together two highly individual musicians that had instantly recognisable tones on their respective instruments. Terry on trumpet and flugelhorn was one of the most admired brassmen in jazz, whose technique and supreme lyricism seemed to make

up the interminable head-solos-head format. Terry and Brookmeyer also vary the rhythmic feel rather than rely on straight-ahead four-four, "Dancing On The Grave" uses the rhythmic scheme from Eddie Harris' then current "Freedom Jazz Dance", "Simple Waltz" is well, a waltz, "Battle Hymn Of The Republic" relies on a good old-fashioned slow backbeat. *Gingerbread*, from 1972, is less exuberant and so slightly detracts from the essential qualities of this group. Yet both albums are reminders of the therapeutic power of "positive" swing.

STUART NICHOLSON

THIS HEAT

This Heat

Rough Trade HEAT 1 CD

Debut

Rough Trade HEAT 2 CD

THESE REISSUES are mementos of an unimaginably different Britrock era. Today an indie blues-rock aims to engulf us in "dreamtime" and the (simulated) effects of drugs. Back then (79-81) the goal was to wake us from our mass-culture sleep, to rouse us from addiction to TV and pop. Demystification was the goal, alienation both aesthetic strategy and subject matter.

Along with Cabaret Voltaire, Scritti Politti, The Pop Group, Throbbing Gristle et al, This Heat forged the syntax of the post-punk avant garde: synchrotones and squelches, hissing programmed percussion, tape-loops and found sounds, effect-ridden guitar. Rhythms had a ciphered relation to reggae or disco rather than rock'n'roll; vocals recalled the lugubrious Englishness of Robert Wyatt. American rockism was stoutly resisted.

Both *This Heat* and *Debut* are haunted by the standard-issue spectres of the 79-worldview: fear and disgust at the amnesiac, anaesthetic comfort of domesticity, anti-consumerism, dread at nuclear annihilation. Since sleep was to be feared, every element of the music was designed to put you on edge. Groove was mostly foregone in favour of brittle, fractured tempos when it did appear, funk had a foreboding compulsion. Elsewhere, This Heat made ambient music, but without the flow, without the repose. "Horizontal Hold" cuts from blistering feedback to a void, timebomb ticktock dub to an abrasive funk-scrabble. "Not Waving" sounds like Wyatt languishing in a dungeon

while mace scamper over Ivor Cutler's harmonium. "Independence" is a mirage of Oriental reggae, gorgeous and deadly, a jewelled cobweb.

In 1979, this was meant to be the dawn of a brave, all-new frontier. In truth, the post-punk avant garde was really a resumption of the techniques of the pre-1977 experimental fringe (Soft Machine, Faust, Can, Henry Cow, The Residents) with a different agenda, far more apprehensive in sound and outlook. With the world scene getting more apocalyptic by the day, This Heat's unsettled and unsettling music seems more timely than it has for a long while.

SIMON REYNOLDS

BARBARA THOMPSON'S PARAPHERNALIA

Breathless

VeraBra CDTM13-2 CD

THIS IS the sixth album *Paraphernalia* have made for VeraBra, and it's surely the best yet. Barbara Thompson has steadily put together a very playable and thoughtful series of records, and if new listeners need a place to key in they should start here. The band master the slickness which fusion stands or falls on, depending on the inclination of one's ears, but Barbara's melodies are strong enough to counteract mechanical virtuosity.

She's continued to develop an alto style that started in bop and now cuts through soul-sax clichés with rigorous aplomb: check the startling solo on "Cheeky" or the parched delineation of the theme on "Gracey". If anything, she's too shy about featuring herself: guitarist Malcolm Macfarlane and keyboard player Peter Lemer are fine players, but it's Thompson's sound and vision that power and nourish the music into a personal identity.

A couple of the arrangements sound too decidedly programmatic to work: "Bad Blues" is a bit corny, and "Sax Rap", after a promising multiphonic opening, peters out in a routine sax-rock arrangement. "Breathless" itself, though, is one of Thompson's grandstand setpieces which moulds together a meticulous series of written episodes with a soloist's dialogue that's as vivid as anything she's done. I also like the slouching "Jaunty", which opens the way for one of the leader's most needling solos. Jon Hiseman drums and produces with his usual punctilious attention to detail. It's fine.

MIKE FISH



every note he played smile with the joy of musicmaking. Brookmeyer on valve trombone was in contrast gruff, a master of paraphrase and melodic development, and the ideal foil for Terry's exuberance. These albums catch both musicians at the peak of their creative powers. *The Power Of Positive Swingin'*, recorded in 1965, came from a time when the group was holding down a residency at New York's "Half Note" and has the cohesion of a regular, working group.

The material they perform is full of craft and interesting touches; varying tone colours (trumpet and trombone or flugel and trombone and use of mutes), use of plunger mutes to articulate themes in new and interesting ways, use of counterpoint (written or improvised), the use of background figures, counter melodies and riffs behind solos and the introduction of transitional themes to break-

LENNIE TRISTANO

Wow

Jazz Records J8-9 CD

THESE TRACKS were recorded on a spool of wire by Billy Bauer at an un-named location in 1950. Inevitably they're lo-fi but engineer Jack Towers has done a good job with it. Importantly, they offer the complete Tristano sextet of the time, with Bauer, Warne Marsh and Lee Konitz upfront (bassist and drummer are unidentified and hardly audible but never mind that, it's still a legendary gathering of talent). Particularly, Tristano is at his most approachable and Warne Marsh at his most obliquely lyrical.

Structurally there are no surprises; some of the meticulous organisation of the studio recordings gives way to a looser feel in these extended performances, but most of the time the standard chord-sequences that the Tristano school reworked so intensely and productively remain the basis of performance. Programmatically it's nevertheless intriguing, there's a little bit of Bach offered as variation, and Bauer's "April Fool", rather than Tristano's own more familiar "April", is used to hollow out the original song. The line of "Wow" is subtly altered from the Capitol studio original, whilst a real bonus is a lengthy workout on "No Figs", which was used for the 1950 Metronome All Stars recording, and which I didn't think existed in any other form.

More than anything, though, what comes over is the intellectual rigour and power of these performances and the immediacy that is consequently generated. Maybe it's something to do with the passage of time – we've got used to a lot of things in the intervening 40 years – but it does make you think – how could music this vibrant simply have been called, rather dismissively, 'cool'?

JACK COOKE

STEVE TURRE

Right There

Anatiles ANCD/ANC 8768 CD/MC

THIS ALBUM is everything the Teddy Edwards record is not. The material and instrumentation is successfully varied, the players take chances and pull them off, and even two vocals (by Akus Dixon Turre, Steve's wife) are far more listenable than they initially promise to be.

Above all, Turre manages to impose himself on the whole enterprise without hogging the majority of the space. His original writing, though fairly functional, is stimulating for both the listener and the sidemen, and his trombone is sufficiently commanding to challenge the others. He saves his conch-shells for a bit of blowing on the final track, a Latin jam just tongue-in-cheek enough to take off in a serious way (there's a bit of singing here too, using the words "Estesun Torredite es tu decarga" to set up the whole thing).

John Blake's violin on a couple of tracks is better than I've heard from him before, also blending well with the trombone, while guests Benny Golson and Wynton Marsalis impress without trying too hard to steal anyone's show. The rhythm-section, including Benay Green really in his element, fires on all cylinders – and on all tracks except the duo arrangement of Ellington's "Echoes Of Harlem" for muted trombone and Akus Dixon's cello. Yes, that's right, and it's only a shame they take it just too fast for comfort. No problems about the rest, though.

BRIAN PRIESTLEY

VARIOUS ARTISTS

Jazzing Baby Blues

Biograph BCD117DDD CD

THIS OFFERS fresh digital recordings of 13 piano rolls cut during 1919–27. As Mike Montgomery points out in his witty, too short accompanying note, the connecting link in this selection is that the titles reflect the usual aspects of the usual boy meets girl/boy gets face slapped routine – "Look What a Fool I've Been" etc. As is only appropriate, both male and female pianists are present. James P. Johnson is boss, of course, and is represented not only by the item just mentioned but also by the extremely rare "He's My Man," of which only one copy is known to exist.

Fats Waller is close behind, yet some of the others who cut the original rolls are so good that it is a matter for regret that we know so little about them. Vee Lavinhurst's account of Walter Donaldson's "Changes" is highly inventive but all we can say is that besides cutting rolls she played in clubs, theatres and broadcast. Ditto for Edythe Baker, though Mandy Randolph did rather better, making some Gennett 78s and recording with her own band for Bluebird in

1936.

Although for these new recordings the rolls were sensitively pumped by Montgomery, a long-standing specialist in this field, they of course have their limitations. We lose, for example, the marked divergence, very familiar from gramophone recordings, between Johnson's and Waller's touch. Again, the fourteenth title is a "live" performance by Montgomery, of the Bocage/Peron "Mama's Gone, Goodbye," and though he is not an outstanding pianist the difference between this and the rolls is at once apparent. Most of the music here leans towards ragtime rather than jazz, and the most engaging items even reach in the direction of the so-called "novelty" piano pieces which followed on from ragtime proper.

MAX HARRISON

Jazzin' Baby Blues

Hot Piano Roll Solos



YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD SAXOPHONE QUARTET

Platinum Nights – The Music of Sun Ra

Copper C306 CD

AN OFFERING placed in the temple of strange. Their name a self-deprecating joke on the World Sax Quartet, YNSQ are a jump ahead of them in terms of repertoire, honouring Sun Ra and his Arkestra with careful arrangements and informative liner notes by Allan Chase (alto and soprano).

Their playing lacks the character of Sun Ra's records. Four saxophones need individual, vocalized sounds more than felicity or speed. Without it, the instrumentation is bland. Windmill, Position Alpha and Hornweb score here – by contrast YNSQ sound capable but anonymous.

Paradoxical also to focus on Sun Ra – the

high priest of GOING TOO FAR – and then make something tame. They are at their worse when attempting to swing: Tom Hall's tuffing baritone is infuriatingly tidy. The tone poets – "Street Named Hell Part Two" and "Media Dream" – sound best, developing some of San Ra's other-worldly loquaciousness into John Carisi-like cameos. On the former Joel Springer's tenor is like an appropriately warped version of Paul Gonsalves. But they do not quite have Ra's measure of the absurdity of repetition.

Nice enough album, but it tells us more about the limits of an academic approach than about San Ra. (When is Hal Willner going to do his Ra tribute? Watson's suggested line-up: Dub Syndicate, The Shuffale Demons, Slade, The Office Ladies, Alan Silva, Bootsie Collins, Jellyfish Kiss, Barbara



Dennerlein, Billy Jenkins, The Lunachicks, Richard Barrett and KLF with Tammy Wynette?) [San Ra, he's justified... and he's ancient – Ed] **DEN WATSON**

**ATTILA ZOLLER/
HANS KOLLER/
MARTIAL SOLAL**
Zo-Ko-Zo

PolyGram/MPS 843.107-2 CD

KOLLER'S FATE may seem a verification of Graham Greene's genial assurance that "success is only delayed failure". The first significant German postwar jazzman, forming groups with Mangelndorff *et alii*, appearing widely at festivals, touring with the likes of Gillespie and Kenton, winning many polls, Koller is now scarcely mentioned. But, if the fruits of this 1965 date recorded in the

remote fastnesses of the Black Forest are anything to go by, PolyGram's "The MPS Years" series might force a reassessment. Guitarist Zoller needs one far less, pianist Solal less of all.

Theme statements aside, on the three tracks by all three of them, though each has more than enough ideas, there is little emphasis on truly collective playing. Most of the space goes to duets, these often assuming a solo-with-accompaniment form, yet the music is very fine despite opportunities missed. For example there are striking unaccompanied, or minimally accompanied, solos by Koller on tenor saxophone in "Away From The Crowd" and "H.J. Meets M.A.H.", followed in the latter by a passage of real, free-flying counterpoint with Zoller. This vein is explored further in "All The Things You Are", which is for just tenor and guitar.

Probably the most daring counterpoint occurs in "Stella By Starlight", a duet by Zoller and Solal, although the guitar's voice is not here quite as strong as on the original Saba LP. Solal's own three solo pieces are consistently volatile yet different mixtures of invention, oblique humour and virtuosity. No doubt early precedents for these trio and duo performances such as Shelly Manne's *The Three And The Two* sessions of 1954 (Original Jazz Classics OJC172) hardly need be mentioned, and perhaps the real point of this resissue is its proof that the most interesting jazz musicians seldom need a rhythm section.

MAX HARRISON

outlines

*Mike Asberton finds a pile of
real old-fashioned blues LPs.*

A MERE two years ago I was, for the first time, able to compile this page solely from reviews of albums in the then-novel CD format. Now it may be that this is the last time I shall be able to fill it with real vinyl LPs.

The Ichiban group of labels shows no sign of staunching its flow of vinyl releases from down in Georgia where their in-house writer, talent-spotter, producer and bottle-washer is Gary "BB" Coleman. Now they have traded his four LPs to compile *The Best Of Gary Coleman* (ICH 1065), and over 50 minutes of thoroughly pleasant listening it is too. The adjective is carefully chosen, for Coleman, a

yearning and convincing singer and a guitarist as neat as a seamstress, rarely raises the listener's blood pressure. Here are a dozen enjoyable if slightly bland slices of modern blues, the versatile BB's guitar sounding like Albert King's on "Word Of Warning", like Rudolph Richard's on "Baby Scratch My Back", his lyrics always strong, as on "One Eyed Woman", and often amusing. This is an after-a-hard-day's work LP, not a Saturday night one.

Coleman's label-mate Sonny Rhodes is one of only three blues artists to gain a reputation as a lap steel guitarist (the others are Hop Wilson and Freddy Roulette). His new album *Drizzle Of The Blues* (Ichiban 9002) shows the turbaned Rhodes to be a positive and forceful artist with a richly biting voice and a mesmerising funky blur of a guitar style. His attacking Texas style shows to its best advantage on uptempo numbers like "Blue Funky Down", but all nine cuts touch a high standard.

Rafael Neal, the admirable singer/harpman and father of a growing brood of blues-playing offspring, doesn't overload the record racks with releases: his *I've Been Misreated* (Ichiban 9004) is his first album since *Louisiana Legend* in 1987. This is a crying shame, as his throaty voice and big-toned, vibrato-laden harp, both so redolent of Louisiana, always make for rewarding listening. This set, like his last, was cut at Kingsnake Studios in Florida with their usual crew, and its ten tracks include several new Neal songs, reworks of his earlier singles "Hard Times" and "Man Watch Your Woman", and a nod to Howlin' Wolf in "Little Red Rooster". There's a little more sheen on the production this time around, but it's still Southern-fried blues all the way, with pride of place going to the Jimmy Reed-styled "Starlight Diamond" with its deep and lonesome harp.

Keyboards on Neal's LP were played by Lucky Peterson, another son of a blues-singing father. Young in years at 27 but old in experience, Peterson survived being a child star, played organ in Little Milton's road band, and in 1989 cut an enthusiastic LP for Alligator Records. His second outing for them is *Triple Play* (AL 4789), a reference to his prowess on guitar, organ and piano. Cut at the same studio as the Neal set, using the same band and also produced by Bob Greenlee, *Triple Play* nevertheless has a

strong stamp of originality thanks to Peterson's youthfully soulful singing and his multi-layered playing, with Hammond organ his strongest suit. His material, largely original, ranges from the plodding, brassy, Albert King-influenced "Let The Chips Fall Where They May" (perhaps a reference to the presentation of meals at my local café), through the wailing proto-soul of "I Found A Love" to the prowling instrumental "Funky Ray". A powerful, meaty LP.

At the Playboy Club down in Greenville, Mississippi, the tough-looking propitius and his little blues band rock the house every weekend with naked, unadorned Delta blues. Now Roosevelt "Booba" Barnes has, at 54, cut his first LP *Heartbroken Man* (Bedrock BEDLP 17). This is the real stuff: intense, frowning vocals, jagged shards of guitar, and unleavened harp backed just by booming bass and walloping, clattering drums. Barnes' heroes are Howlin' Wolf and Bobby Bland and, disconcertingly, he has a way of playing the latter's songs such as "I Pity The Fool" in the former's style and getting away with it. But the rocking numbers like "Rockin' Daddy" and "Scratch My Back" really catch fire, exuding a full-tilt exuberance rarely heard on disc since the demise of Hound Dog Taylor.

The best white blues artists are those who don't try too hard to sound black, and that's the case with Buddy Reed & Th'Rip It Ups, a Californian band whose "Tough Enough" may regrettably be the last vinyl LP on the long-serving Red Lightnin' label. Reed's singing is closer to Buddy Holly than to Buddy Guy, but his guitar is busy, nasty-toned and at times dazzling, taking in elements of J.B. Hutto, Lonnie Mack and others. The atmosphere of the album is summed up in the small print of the credits: "Nick Killian, motor sickle on 'Kiss My Ass'". This is an exuberant 11-track romp through every R&B style from the Delta Blues of "Blues For Mud" to the rocking zydeco of "Sugar Bee", taking in vocal groups, Bo Diddley and Californian bikers along the way. An eclectic and splendidly entertaining first album from the quartet.

jazz licks

Philip Watson cruises the blue twilight

MARTY EHRLICH/ANTHONY COX FALLING

MAN (*Man* MCD 5398 CD) A set of eight originals and two standards that provide a variety of textural and tonal contexts for reedsman/flautist Ehrlich and bassist Cox to explore. Inspired by the duets of Eric Dolphy and Richard Davis, Ehrlich and Cox actually favour a gentler, organic approach rather than a freer turbulence, but in all contexts it's a dialogue both highly coherent and highly rewarding.

RICCARDO DEL FRA A SIP OF YOUR TOUCH (*IDA 021 CD*) Another album of duets – this time anchored by Italian double bassist Del Fra. Most engaging are those with Dave Liebman's darting, chasing, cracking soprano and with the ardent, lyrical work of pianist Michel Graillier. Del Fra providing the rhythmic and harmonic underlay throughout Art Farmer is featured on flugelhorn on two tracks. Interesting stuff.

THE FRANK GLOVER TRIO MOSAIC (*FGA Records FGA 01-91 CD*) Great to hear the clarinet in such a modern, polyrhythmic, (if vaguely fusionish) setting. A set of 24 originals, three freely improvised, young American reedsman Glover favours simple, bluesy melodies and quicksilver solos that are lustrous and melodic. On saxophones, he is less convincing on tenor, more at ease on soprano. An intelligent and enjoyable record.

BILLY PIERCE ONE FOR CHUCK (*Savoyville SSC 1053D CD*) Straightahead but powerful quintet recording with Mulgrew Miller (p), Bill Mobley (tp) and Messengers and Tony Williams' acolyte Pierce (ts, ss) at the helm. Even with this increasingly narrow post-bop genre, Pierce squeezes out new possibilities both of tone (a sweet, smooth, cool legato) and approach (soloing that is thoughtfully melodic). Ends with two beautifully crafted solo pieces – "Solar" and "I'm Getting Sentimental Over You".

BOBBY PREVITE MUSIC OF THE MOSCOW CIRCUS (*Gramercy GRV 74662 CD*) A typically offbeat and curiously appealing one-off from drummer Previte in which he attempts to capture all the passion, energy and danger of the innovative, highly theatrical Moscow Circus. Interspersed with short bursts of crazy, comic musical clowning (none better than Herb Robertson's 28-second trumpet blast), this is a show com-

plete with opening overtures, thunderous marches, seductive tangos, traditional circus melodies, cymbal crashes, and triumphant finales. Great fun.

JOE SACHSE EUROPEAN HOUSE (*FMP CD41 CD*) Seventy-four minutes of enigmatically gripping solo guitar. Designed in three parts with a middle section made up of such standards as "Epistrophe" and "Impressions", Sachse's house is built with the bricks of tradition and the shards of innovation, the whole being held together by the rhythms of blues, rock, country, even flamenco, and by his surprisingly successful use of guitar body as snare, guitar case as bass drum and plastic bag as hi-hat.

CHARLIE SEPULVEDA THE NEW ARRIVAL



(*Antilles 314-510 056-2 CD*) Newly arrived at Antilles via the Dizzy Gillespie Big Band, Puerto Rican Sepulveda is another bravura, pyrotechnical trumpeter and flugelhorn maestro who breezes through nine straightahead salsa and Cubop tracks that range from the giddy and galvanising to fusion-lead ballads that float worryingly on a sea of electric piano and synth effects. British tenorist Ralph Moore is featured on three tracks.

GARY SMITH RHYTHM GUITAR (*Insipetus IMP CD 18920 CD*) The extreme antithesis of the Sachse disc and the worst record I've heard in quite some time. London-based guitarist Smith may vaguely progress from acoustic to amplified acoustic to electric through the course of 22 solo improvisations, but he basically strums and slides his way around the same chord, at the same tempo, for 72

minutes. Tedious, repetitive and excruciatingly boring.

FRANCO AMBROSETTI MUSIC FOR SYMPHONY AND JAZZ BAND (*Enja 6070 2 CD*) Swiss trumpeter Ambrosetti collaborates here with composer and arranger Daniel Schayder for a surprisingly successful fusion of symphony and swing. A very long and rewarding way from being just another "with strings" record, Schayder creates swirling, sonorous textures within which the orchestra is both independent and integrated. Most are arrangements of standards – the marriage works best on the original material. Greg Osby is featured on alto.

ALEX DEUTSCH'S PINK INC (*DIW-852E CD*) A power trio that welds together Deutsch's tight, dry rock and funk grooves with Jamaaladeen Tacuma's warm, stringing electric bass and some throaty, vulcanising tenor and soprano work from George Garzone. Apart from one too many drum solos and an embarrassing pseudo-rap track, this is probably the reason you read this column – for that little gem that would otherwise go unnoticed. Comes with extensive CD booklet – entirely in Japanese.

STEVE GROSSMAN MY SECOND PRIME (*Real 123246-2 CD*) Last issue, Mike Vico asked if tenorist Grossman wasn't ripe for a rediscovery à la Joe Lovano. On the strength of this live quarter date (a little thinly) recorded at Italy's 1990 La Spezia festival, the title of which nods at such a reawakening, the answer must be "yes". Grossman receives little rhythmic support, and much of the material is well-worn post-bop ballad and bossa reworkings, but his approach lands successfully somewhere between Sonny Rollins and Dexter Gordon – soaring, swinging, and overflowing with ideas.

GROOVE HOLMES HOT TAT (*Mot MCD 5395 CD*) The Hammond organ grinder, as ever, living up to his nickname. Perhaps his final recording (the release following his death in June last year), this is the Groove at his funkiest, stomping, soulful best, and saccharine, show-time worst. Great in-the-pocket soloing from Houston Person on tenor and Cecil Bridgewater on trumpet. Comes with tacky, bikini-clad "Hot Tat" cover. A big man and a big beat.

HENRY KAISER/JIM O'Rourke TOMORROW KNOWS WHERE YOU LIVE (*Vish CD 014*

CD) Starts with a track called "All Aboard For Futuresville!", but give me a journey back to the pre-New Age meets Heavy Industrial meets Free Improvisation world anyway. Guitar duelling at its muddy and nightmarish worst.

FRANK KU-UMBA LACY TONAL WEIGHTS AND BLUE FIRE (*Tutu 888 112 CD*) Great title, great record. Fred Hopkins is superb on bass, his tone full and proud, and given space here, it seems as much his album as Lacy's. Trombonist, pianist, organist and vocalist Lacy is a graduate of groups led by Henry Threadgill, Lester Bowie and Art Blakey (where he was musical director), and his playing swings from funkish Fred Wesley to bopping JJ Johnson. Burning, straightforward, exuberant.

KIRK LIGHTSEY TRIO FROM KIRK TO NAT (*Crms Crest 1050 CD*) A strong tribute to the king (if underrated) piano work of Nat King Cole. Echoing the great man's guitar and bass trios of the 40s, it features Kevin Eubanks and Rufus Reid and such Cole favourites as "Sweet Lorraine" and "Bop Kick". Although Lightsey's playing jostles the music along with a sweet lean, Eubanks doesn't always appear comfortable in this context. Generally, though, an enjoyable set. The two vocal cuts are described as "wussy and tender talk-sing narratives". Quite.

GUST WILLIAM TSILIS SEQUESTERED DAYS (*Enja 6094 2 CD*) Chicago-born composer, vibraphonist, marimba player, producer, promoter and polymath Tsilis assembles a dynamic quintet for his second Enja album as leader with Joe Lovano (ts), Peter Madsen (p), Anthony Cox (b) and Billy Hart (d). Nine of the 12 rhythmically-led compositions are the leader's and all move intelligently through post-bop forms, Lovano and Madsen being particularly impressive. Worth buying for the deep, earthy, echoing sounds of Tsilis's marimba alone.

PETRAS VYSNIAUSKAS VIENNESE CONCERT (*Leo LR 172 CD*) Another good-in-parts Leo release featuring the often serene soprano work of Vysniauskas in live solo, trio and quartet settings. The solo opener, "Plunge", is an especially exquisite exploration of daring intervals and long, single lines; and Vysniauskas moves from the romantic to the raucous with skill and ease. The final, scrambling tracks, with Vyacheslav Ganelin on piano and synth, are less successful.

eurolicks

Disques sans frontières, Biba Koff is your polyglot guide

VARIOUS ALS DIE PARTISANEN KAMEN/WHEN THE PARTISANS CAME – BERLIN UNDERGROUND 1919–83 (*Zenar CD ZS 115*); **COMPOSERS** SILHOUETTES – MUSIC BETWEEN TODAY AND TOMORROW VOL. 1 (*Zenar CD 112*); The years before the fall of West Berlin in October 1989 can be broken down into periods of immense unrest and creativity – the two not always in sync – and sloughs of enormous despair. The Partisans compilation records an uncommonly fertile time that saw the coming of Ensurarende Neubauten, Die Haut, Mania D (later Malaria and Matador) and the awry electronics of Frieder Buzmann. But the period's richness is really down to tremendous fresh one-offs like Boris's "Hiroshima" – an elegant waltz subjected to a blizzard of noise – Rainy Day Women's "The Return of The Red Brigades" and Konstantin's "Sing Me A Little Worker Struggle Song". Highly recommended. The failure of the *Silhouettes* composers – Conrado del Rosario, Udo Agnieszka, Nikolaos Drelas, Marc Lingk and Ulrich Krieger – is how they've remained completely untouched by the Partisan years. Nevertheless, an invaluable gauge of music created in the deathly void of conservatory tradition. (*Zenar, Holstenische Strasse 39–42, 1000 Berlin 41.*)

A.G. GEIGE RAABE! (*Zenar ZEN 2 CD*) Turning material lack to their advantage, the formerly East German A.G. Geige exploited the queer warpones of the instruments available to them to construct wussy *faux naïf* set pop pieces after the influence of early Residents, Der Plan and Die Todliche Dosis. Fortunately, they've sacrificed none of their inventiveness in upgrading their sound for the new era. Nor have they forgotten the state that shaped them. Their Kinderfunk unhinges mayday style parades, while the sprung clockwork keyboards of "Vorsicht-Vorwärts/Careful-Forwards" sends progress head over heels only to leave it flat on its ass.

DIE ERDE LIVE BERLIN/LOFT (*What's So Funny About WSA 109 CD*) Hamburg's Die Erde bravely forsook a lucrative career following up the sonic guitar thump of their underground hit "Purry" to devise something altogether more ambitious: an innovative

style of German song sounding like a hybrid of Alex Harvey, Gavin Friday and Joy Division. Working a narrow tonal band, Tobias Gruben's speak-singing style registers the fine calibrations of mood and irony necessary to the impact of, say, "Leben Den Lebenden" – a litany of sorrows overcome, set in queasy motion by a gallowes-swinging drum pattern. Perversely, the group split the night this was recorded, leaving behind a sadly small legacy of great songs (WSFA, *Becker 21, D-2000 Hamburg 36.*)

NAGORNY KARABACH *KLEINE EXCURSION!* *SMALL EXCURSION (What's So Funny About SF 106 CD)* Wickedly describing their defining keyboard sound as "the stalin organ" that would sink Babylon, Münster's monstrous Nagorny Karabach are as savagely expressive as the demonic Otto Dex painting they've lifted for the sleeve. Like their cover star, NK's music explodes at the point where melancholy topples headlong into despair and violence. Their version of Kraftwerk's "Radioaktivität" converts the original's electronic waveforms into an emotionally swollen protest song. DAF's "As If It Were . . ." is similarly overturned.

MATADOR *ECROUTE (Masabi 008 CD)* After two LPs of indeterminate direction, the Berlin women's trio Matador have at last settled on the pace that best suits their sultry electronics and deep-punked vocals – the dragging midtempo settings that keep the ember glow of their passions slowburning longest. *Ensuite* completes the map through Berlin's shadowy emotional terrain begun on Malaz's first EP. The midsize quartet of "Nobody Knows", "Going Home", "Dead City" and "Screaming Day" is the perfect sequence of city songs of fear, love and dashed hopes their admirers knew they'd sooner or later dream into existence. (*Masabi Musik, Box 620 349, 1000 Berlin 62.*)

WILHELM BREUKER KOLLEKTIEF *HEIBEL (Bakstak CD 9102)* The circular chessbox package is not the only good humoured novelty about Breuker's avantist pastiches of radio big band jazz. The Heibel section, recorded live in Stockholm and Amsterdam, sounds like an antique broadcast bounced off a distant star and returning to Earth still fresh and young after decades in space. The German radio commission "The Critic" has vocalist Geertje Bijma glossolalia-ing wildly in counterpoint with violinist Loeke Lynn Tryt-

ten. Never less than diverting. (BVHAAS, distributed by Cadillac.)

SPRUNG AUS DEN WOLKEN *ROUNDANDAROUND (Les Disques Du Soleil et De L'Acier CDSA 54013)* THE STORY OF ELECTRICITY/PAS ATTENDRE (CDSA 54015) Translating as Leap Out Of The Clouds, SADW are the most heavenly of Berlin's unfairly ignored underground groups. Sparked by crude electric guitars and ominous percussion patters, 1987's *Story Of Electricity* brilliantly mythologises the neo-primitive energies released in the decay of modern cities. The CD bonus is *Pas Attendre* – featured in Wenders' *Wings Of Desire*. *Roundandaround* aptly describes their work methods: rotating riffs round in on themselves like snakes eating their own tails. As hypnotic as it is compellingly ugly. (*Les Compact Disques Du Soleil et De L'Acier, BP 236, 54004 Nancy, Cedex.*)

SYSTEM 01 featuring TIMOTHY LEARY FROM *PSYCHEDELICS TO CYBERNETICS (Interfuch IF-SETH 026 CD)* A marginally more useful survivor than Malcolm McLaren, if no less self-aggrandizing, Timothy Leary's East Berlin facade chat on chaos, psychedelics and cybernetics fragments nicely into the fincure aphorisms – "everyone gets the drug they deserve" – which Australio-German Hausmeisters System 01 proceed to set in beam-rattling dance grids. Whatever they're on should be freely available through the NHS. (*Interfuch, PO Box 36 04 28, 1000 Berlin 36.*)

VARIOUS THE YOUNG FLAMENCOS (LES JOVENES FLAMENCOS) (*Hannibal CD 1370*) I never figured flamenco as a living form until I saw teen delinquents gathered around a ghetto-blaster in a Toledo backstreet, clapping triplets in time and vocally riding waves of heated guitar exchanges. Happily, this Hannibal compilation owes more to that backstreet spirit than the Gypsy Kings. Well annotated, the disc tracks flamenco's progress into the 21st century, from the likes of Jorge Pardo through the smouldering song-tylings of Aurora and the "cool" flamenco of Kertama. As vital a part of Spanish cultural renewal as Almodovar's movies.

VARIOUS *MORTAR (Pernis De Construire Deutschland PPP104)* Like all valuable compilations *Mortar* amplifies faint signals of life from across Europe and New York into a resounding roar that dispels the gloom of the prevailing mediocrity, giving the lie to the

mean that nothing is happening. What's going on is below the surface, but no longer out of earshot. The disc's common denominator is a deeply reverberating guitar noise mostly played tortuously slow over samples and condemned rhythms stretching out a shortlived reprieve. Featuring Caspar Brotzman, Cop Shoot Cop, Gore, French exiles Grill and Nox, Justin Broadrick's pre-Godflesh project Fall Of Because, Cable Regime. (*Pernis etc, Kernerstrasse 13, 7156 Wittenst, Germany.*)

ALBOTH *AMOUR 1991 (Pernis De Construire Deutschland PPP 107)* A Swiss piano trio that dances as fast as it can to keep up with John Zorn's Spy Vs Spy. That they don't trip over their feet isn't the extent of their feat – there's some splendid bleeding and shrieking fusions of upper register piano and bass – but



speed for speed's sake is a hard rush to sustain. Even so, their juddering stop-starts earn them the exclamation mark that pulls their name up short.

DIE TOTEN HOSEN *LEARNING ENGLISH (LESSON ONE) (Vergil VIR11)* Düsseldorf latecomers Die Toten Hosen/Dead Trousers devised a bafflingly funny losers-as-winners philosophy out of punk's dogend days that has paradoxically made them Germany's most popular group. Their longevity shades the hopeless heroes who guest on this tribute to The Unknown Punk. Gene October, Charlie Harper, The Lurkers, Jimmy Pursey, the late Johnny Thunders and others relive their finest two minutes in DTH's excellent company. Not everyone has a novel inside them, but any amount of cackhanding oafs managed at least one classic punk song apiece.

Rare AND Fine

A complete collection of back issues of *The Wire* is a prized archive indeed; with many issues out of print and many more now very low in our back issue storeroom, now is definitely the time to fill in gaps before many key issues are gone forever into private collections.

The following are still available (* indicates very few copies remain):

***1 Steve Lacy**, Eric Dolphy, Harold Land, Ron Blake, John Stevens, Max Roach.

12 Afro Jazz, Laura Anderson, Chris McGregor, Phil Minton & Roger Turner.

18 Sonny Rollins, Tenney Chase, Joyce Cox, Bobby McFerrin, Stanley Jordan, Bernard Tansman, Joe Farrell.

19 Ornette Coleman, Charlie Haden, Steve Lacy, Slim Gaillard, Jazz Cartoons.

20 Art Blakey, Hank Mobley, Gordon Tins, Bobby Watson, Wynton & Branford Marsalis.

21 Chet Baker, Patsy Zen, Janis Joplin, Tavares, Chico Valdes & Arturo Sandoval, Phil Wachsmann, Michael Nyman, Nozko Erigay.

22 John Coltrane, Jonico Blood, Ulmer, The Guest Stars, Ruben Blades, Nathan Davis.

23 Bill Laswell, Louie Taber, Celia Cruz, Azzurro O'Day, Alvin Bash, Arto Lindsay.

24 Betty Carter, Jonny Smith, Paul Bley, John Abernethy, Sidney Baker, Maggie Nicolo, Vienna Art Orchestra.

***25 Courtney Pine**, Paul Motuan, George Coleman, Latawa Berni, Gerry Mulligan.

***30 Chico Freeman**, Alex von Schlippenbach, Eddie Harris.

32 Django Bates, Davey Rubman, Tony Oxley, Dismantled Galas, Weather Report.

33 Sonny Rollins, Dave Breakey, The Beasts, John Russell.

34/35 Lester Bowie, Branford Marsalis, Dexter Gordon, Sergio Chaloff, Louie Taber, Paul Lytton & Paul Loney, Frank Zappa.

36 Steve Williamson, Philip Best, Bill Fiedel, Art Farmer, Tashman Kondo.

37 Bobby McFerrin, Hampton Hawes, Dirty Dozen Brass Band, John Laro.

38 Wynton Marsalis, Wayne Shorter, Nigel Kennedy.

39 Andy Sheppard, Gil Evans, Shelia Jordan, Yaddi Dameron.

40 Ornette Coleman, Charlie Haden, Charles Rose, Robert Ashley.

41 Thelonious Monk, Steve Coleman, Steve Sitallow, Krenn, Tenney Smith.

42 Horace Silver, Bud Shank, Xero Slingby, Barney Widen.

43 Pat Metheny, Robert Johnson, Albert Collman, Charles Mariano, Italy Fingers.

46/47 Courtney Pine, Cecil Taylor, Roland Kirk, Mike & Kate Westbrook, Bix Beiderbecke, Bala Gonzalez.

48 Joe Henderson, King Oliver, Warm March, Herman Leonard, Harold Budd, Dave Liebman.

***49 Julius Hemphill**, Frank Morgan & Mike Stern, Billy Jenkins, Clark Tracy, Akemi Kato.

***50 David Holland**, Tenney Smith, 50 Players, Italian Jazz.

51 Marilyn Crispell, Andy Kirk, Roland Perrin, Gal Enari, Dwayne Richmond, Caprice Brumman.

52 Sonny Rollins, Ed Blackwell, Hank Roberts, Martin Archer, Ornette Coleman.

53 John Scofield, Chet Baker, John McLaughlin, Johnny Hodge, Van Freeman, Elliott Sharp.

54 Jason Rebello, Jonny Rosset, Bob Stewart, Defenks, Ashland Hall.

55 David Sanborn, Booker Little, John Laro, Jaron Krenn, Lou Gare.

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***63 Duke Ellington,** Billy Strayhorn, Bessie Norman, Orphy Robinson, Harry Connick, Roy Eldridge

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69 Courtney Pine & Iain Ballamy, Willen Brander, Benny Bailey, Dan Barrett

70/71 29th Street Saxophone Quartet, Cassandra Wilson, Marvin Souty Smith, Luc Koutz, Michael Nymen, Bobby Bradford, John Rae Collective, Essential Albums Of The 80s, Brink Jazz Supplement

***75 Roadside Picnic,** Mingus On Record - 1, John Scofield & Joe Lovano, Annette Pincock, Peter Maxwell Davies, Michel Petrucci, Andy Sheppard Big Band

76 John Surman, Jazz Warriors, Dexter Gordon, Shankar, Krzysztof Penderecki, Mingus On Record - 2, Tommy Smith

77 McCoy Tyner, Mary Lou Williams, Kenny Barron, Max Roach, Chris McGregor, Carol Kidd

78 Sun Ra, Frank Sinatra, Jon Hassell, Eugene Chadbourne, Vinny Golus, Dade Pakowski

79 Jimi Hendrix, Don Cherry, Ray Anderson, Pat We Russell, Fred Wesley

80 Bebo, Mafu On Record - 1, Louis Sclaus, Scott Hamilton, Eno

81 Andy Summers, Steve Coleman, Art Blakey, Miles On Record - 2, Joe Zawinul, Jason Rebello

***82/83 Quincy Jones,** Cecil Taylor, Ralph Peterson, John Gibbons, Miles On Record - 3, Stockhausen & Wolfson, Film Music

***84 European Jazz,** Eberhard Weber, Django Reinhardt, F.M.P. Pierre Boulez

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92 Van Morrison, Tim Machine, Dave Barrill, Geoff Korum, Joseph Haydn, Leon Redbone

93 Punk celebration, Jak Wabbe, Eric Dolphy, Punkjazz, Buddy Guy, The Gombosi, Wre

94/95 Great Black Music, Wynton Marsalis, Lenny Armstrong, Motown, La Cote & Public Enemy, Madge Muller, Arthur Bliss, Taj Mahal



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Application forms and guidelines are available from the Music Department, Arts Council of Great Britain, 14 Great Peter Street, London SW1P 3NQ. The closing date for Part 1 of the scheme will be 24 February 1992. Please enclose a stamped self-addressed envelope.



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SPACE IN THEIR HEADS AND TIME ON THEIR HANDS

YOU KNOW these guys who advertise "Spider Ladder", the "New Senaya Woodman" and expect us to pay £274.49 for a "Grannyvac"?

Well are they serious? Just give me a Jim Beam so I can drown the spider, and give the dog a hanger. As for the "Grannyvac" — um, second thoughts, don't give me the Jim Beam, 'cos I'll get drunk and do something stupid like pay £274.49 to clean my telephone (which I don't even have!).

But then again, I've probably made you laugh, and so you may just give me the Jim Beam. But then again, I may have irritated you, so you won't.

Well, if I say *The Wire* is a perfect thing in life, then maybe you will. You see, we all love you madly.

SARAH RAZVI, Cardiff

SPACE IN THEIR HEADS AND TIME ON THEIR HANDS #2

I WAS four weeks into my first trip to Europe and, having never been there before, I couldn't be sure I was hitting all the right places. My overnight stop in London included a trip of the bar to the Beatles at Abbey Road and a pre-dawn visit to the Royal Albert Hall to soak in the history. There was no doubt that the North Sea Jazz Fest was the place to be as close to Heaven on Earth as you can get. My concern when I got off the train in Paris? Was there some out-of-the-way jazz hang-out like Bradleys in Greenwich Village or the old Keystone Korner in San Francisco's North Beach? A quick check of the Pariscope and I settled in for a six night stay at New Morning and was not disappointed (Elvin Jones, Macéo Parker, Chico Freeman, Don Pullen etc).

In Madrid, I cleaned my palate with the Moorish soul of flamenco and the jazz club scene of old Madrid. On my way to the WC in the Café Central, I was stopped in my tracks. There on the wall was an enlarged reproduction of page 52 of *Wire* #84: THE GREAT EUROPEAN VENUES. I then realised my instincts had served me well. I was standing in #8 on the list and had spent my nights in Paris at the top of your list!

It was reassuring to know that if you *Wire* dudes were in Europe at the same time I was, we would have been hanging out at the same place.

FELIX J. CONTRERAS, Fresno, California
Reassuring? That's because you've never met us — the Wire dudes.

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ORNETTE NOT ROTTEN SHOCK CLAIM

FOR ME, the impact of your Punk issue was considerably reduced by the density and sheer incomprehensibility of some of the actual articles. The most revealing part was actually a single quoted sentence from Jah Wobble: "You can't just be against things, you have to offer something as well." Punk was certainly against things. As far as the music was concerned, it was against any kind of conspicuous kind of virtuosity, or even musical competence in conventional terms. What it had to offer in place of this was anger and energy, but little else, which is why the punk style survived as a phenomenon for only a short time.

I am not convinced that it produced any worthwhile legacy at all. Certainly, to suggest that harmonic jazz players owe any debt to the style is to be ingenuous in the extreme. I would suggest that in creating his electric jazz, Ornette Coleman was responding in his own idiosyncratic way to the likes of Miles Davis and Weather Report, and by no means attempting to become a black Johnny Rotten. Let us not forget that the use of noise as an inspirational musical technique was introduced to jazz at least 15 years before punk, with Ornette as one of the pioneers.

Meanwhile, within the rock world at any rate, we are left with a general suspicion of any music that tries to be ambitious, that tries to appeal to the intellect in any more than a superficial manner. The result is that the majority of the rock music produced in

the last ten years has been bland and that jazz, which cannot help being a music that relies to an extent on virtuosity, has become increasingly marginalized.

This is the legacy of punk — and it is no cause for celebration.

NICK HAMLYN, Pied Piper records, Northampton.

The legacy? The knowledge that "conspicuous . . . virtuosity, or even musical competence" were not on their own enough. Which is a big claim, that most musicians would resist. Ornette also made it — first, as we also said, and less utterly clearly (some people still call his music "jazz"). You won the Jim Beam, for writing "ingenuous" when you meant (I assume) "disingenuous" — MS

BEST PART OF BREAKING UP

NOT TOO long ago I wrote you a rude letter which you probably shrugged off and quickly forgot — as part of a flood of similarly angry letters? Yet I was ashamed of having written it; writing angry letters was never my hobby, and a magazine cannot be so important to one's life as to deserve such harangues.

You do provide entertaining and informative reading, and you still keep a place for jazz — though you do not honour it with the cover story. So OK, I'm convinced: I'm renewing my subscription.

PAUL VENTURA ARAUJO, Vila Nova de Gaia, Portugal.

CHICO MARKS OFF

PER YOUR "Out There And Back" article by Brian Morton on Eric Dolphy in the November issue — Eric recorded four albums with Chico, not five as mentioned. *With Strings Attached*, *Gong East!* and *The Three Faces Of Chico* for Warner Brothers, and *That Hamilton Man* for Sesac. Presently, *Gong East!* is available on CD on Discovery, and *That Hamilton Man* on CD on Fresh Sounds (entitled *Chico Hamilton Quintet featuring Eric Dolphy*).

You might also be interested to hear that earlier this year, Chico did an interview for an NOS (Dutch TV) documentary special on Eric Dolphy produced by Marian Brouwer and directed by Hans Hylkema entitled *Last Day*, featuring footage of Eric's last TV appearance on Dutch TV (with Mingus) before his death in Berlin.

Keep up the good work.
JEFFREY ANDREW CADDICK, Chico Hamilton Productions, East 45th Street, New York



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